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Early, Old, New and Comparative Regionalism:

The Scholarly Development of the Field

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EARLY, OLD, NEW AND COMPARATIVE REGIONALISM:

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Abstract

By tracing the intellectual roots and main characteristics of the scholarly debates on regionalism in different time periods, this Working Paper seeks to contribute to the consolidation of a fragmented field of study in search of its own intellectual history. The paper identifies four main intellectual phases: early regionalism, old regionalism (in both Europe and the developing world), new regionalism, and the current phase of regionalism, referred to as comparative regionalism. It argues that progress in the study of (comparative) regionalism requires a better understanding of the intellectual roots of the field and an acknowledgment of the many types of regions that have occurred in many different historical contexts.

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1. Introduction[1]

One of the main characteristics of the study of regionalism is that regionalism means different things to different people in different contexts and time-periods. The resulting diversity leads to contestation, among both academics and policy makers, about the meaning of regionalism, its causes and effects, how it should be studied, and not least why and how to compare. This paper argues that progress in the field of regionalism requires better understanding of the intellectual roots and the scholarly development of the field. Therefore, the paper seeks to contribute to the consolidation of a fragmented field of study in search of its own intellectual history. The main argument is that scholars need to engage with ideas about regions and regionalism from different time periods, discourses, disciplines, and regional specializations, which is somewhat rare in the current debate.

Even if the distinction between old and new regionalism has been rather widely made in the debate about regionalism, (intellectual) history has received muted attention. Most scholars claim that regionalism is a post-World War II phenomenon, which ignores the many varieties of regions and regionalisms apparent in different historical periods. This common notion has prevented scholars from understanding both its deep historical roots, as well as its "global heritage" (Acharya 2012). It has also resulted in an exaggeration of formalized regional organizations at the expense of more fluid types of regionalization and region-building around the world.

Regions need to be closely related to the changing historical political context, especially those concerning political organization and world order, and consequently, new forms of regions may occur in different times. However, throughout history there have also been important continuities between various types of regionalism, which obviates rigid temporal distinctions. Many regional projects and regional organizations were initiated during the era of old regionalism and then simply renewed or re-inaugurated in the 1980s and 1990s, albeit often with new names, objectives, and sometimes with an expanded membership. Hence, rather than identifying different waves of regionalism in the temporal sense, this paper tries to trace the intellectual roots and main characteristics of the scholarly debates in different time periods.

The paper distinguishes between four different phases in the scholarly development of the field: early conceptions of regionalism, old regionalism, new regionalism, and the current phase of regionalism, which is referred to as 'comparative regionalism'. With the exception of early regionalism – which covers a vast array of ideas and traditions from different spaces and times – the three remaining intellectual discourses are described in a similar way. First, the political context and the policy content are outlined (policy direction, institutions and agents). Then the analysis focuses on theoretical and conceptual issues, the research agenda, the modes of knowledge production, and methodology.

2. Early Regionalism

Translocal economic, political, social, and cultural integration has taken place in many different historical contexts. Pre-modern exchange systems were often based on symbolic kinship bonds and also contained an important element of diplomacy and the creation of trust between isolated communities. Yet, in many pre-modern communities outside relations were scattered and randomly spread, first and foremost through trade and migration, and did not always have a very strong impact on everyday life. Often geographical and environmental obstacles prevented more organized interaction. In order to further regionalize, the potential region (proto-region) must, necessarily, experience increasing interaction and more frequent contact between human communities. Migratory patterns were particularly important for the creation of new ethnicities, social and cultural structures and spaces (informal regions), as well as more bureaucratic and organized political entities, compared to the smaller chiefdoms that previously co-existed.

The formal and political organization of cross-community interactions can thus be traced far back in history, as seen in a rich variety of geographically confined empires, kingdoms, alliances, pacts, unions, and confederations between assorted political units. By a political region I refer to a group of political units, which have, more or less ambitiously, entered into some kind of purposeful cooperation, the simplest form being an alliance system or trade pact, but also spanning deeper forms of unification. Political regions in this sense have been with us throughout human political history, even though it is rather difficult to differentiate between what was a 'state' and a 'region' in the pre-Westphalian era. A relevant distinction in this context can be made between coercive and voluntary integration to create a political region.

Imperial integration, which was mainly – but not only – coercive, implied political unity and the spread of cultural values, creating what is referred to as 'civilizations'. Empires came in many different forms, centralized or decentralized (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997), the latter often consisting of semi-autonomous pre-modern states, provinces, or kingdoms. There have been empires in isolation, dominating different 'worlds' (or 'civilizations') that had little contact, while others have interacted, competed or destroyed each other.

Empires must show some duration to be called empires. Perhaps the most enduring empire was the Chinese, established in 221 BC and then ruled by a number of dynasties until the creation of the Republic of China in 1912. India oscillated between centralized and decentralized forms, marked by different religions. Ancient Egypt was long-lived but mixed stability with periods of much more unstable rule. The empire of Alexander the Great (336-323) is a dubious case, due to its short duration. The modern empires of Hitler and Mussolini were also short-lived, as was the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, controlled for a brief period by the Empire of Japan.

The typical pre-modern political order in many other parts of the world was the more or less centralized empire. In Europe, however, the immediate pre-Westphalian experience was an extremely decentralized political order that was often referred to as 'feudalism'– which was essentially a collapsed empire that had to find some kind of order in the chaos of unintended decentralization. This system was not at all systematic, but rather a bewildering mixture of often incompatible elements: the Christian Church represented by the Pope (a church later to be divided between Catholics and Protestants), an empire project with the purpose of unifying Europe under one emperor, tribal chiefs in the periphery, feudal lords ruling over a

subjugated peasantry in the center, emerging kings who originated from the major feudal lords and who controlled large pieces of territory, trading networks that covered most of Europe and partly linked it with the outside world, and an emerging bourgeoisie in semi-independent cities.

In the modern era, empires and nation-states clashed. Empires were sometimes imposed upon nation-states, while some empires were transformed into nation-states according to the Westphalian logic. The process of state-building itself was also coercive (especially in its early form), and often it was not clear if the ambition was to build a state or an empire. The primary goal was political control. Nevertheless, the two types of polities, empire and nation-states, are based on different logics. The empire does not have fixed borders like the territorially defined nation-state, but rather a moving frontier depending on the strength of the imperial state. An empire is a multicultural polity, whereas at least the typical Westphalian nation-state has a 'national culture' and is usually highly integrated in economic, social, political and cultural terms. An empire is based on dynastic legitimacy (normally backed up by some sort of transcendental force), a nation-state on national legitimacy (with absolutism as a transitional form). Empire by itself constituted a multilateral system, nation-states form part of a multilateral system over which (in principle) no one has control (anarchy). These distinctions are important since there are certain similarities between empires and contemporary regions, but of course also important differences.

The idea of Westphalia as a new kind of political formation centers on the state as an institution, which is autonomous from imperial 'overlay', as well as independent from local power-holders (in small kingdoms or in historical regions). Since Westphalia implied a lack of authority 'above' the state, a new kind of 'anarchical' international system emerged. To begin with, this regional system was confined to or led by Europe: "The European international society" (Watson 1992). In this system the states had to rely on 'self-help' in order to survive. This led to balance-of-power politics and alliance-systems. Political science and later IR presented this as a 'natural' political order comparable to the economic system analyzed by the economists. The unique Westphalian logic has of course also been questioned and deconstructed (Krasner 1999). However, because the modern state-system undeniably functioned differently from the medieval order, some form of change must have occurred. The absolute state enjoyed absolute power over the economy, which was subordinate to state interests (mercantilism), due to the functional relationship which existed between a strong economy and a strong state. The point with mercantilism was not the maximization of economic development but the optimization of political control. Classical mercantilism can thus be best understood as the political economy of state-formation (List 1909).

In the context of the industrial revolution, the mercantilist logic became less preoccupied with trade and more with industrial strength, which was typically seen as being essential for national survival. This is usually referred to as the 'modernization imperative'. The state capitalist strategy thus belongs to an early phase of industrial development in continental Europe and the US. Typically this strategy was an attempt to enforce development upon primarily agrarian economies. As soon as state-fostered industrialization had been carried out, although not before then, it was beneficial to participate in the international division of labor (List 1909).

Trading relations needed to be managed within as well as beyond Europe. The German Customs Union, the Zollverein (1834-1919), is a primary example within Europe. The Zollverein was a coalition of German

states and kingdoms which managed the enormous number of trade barriers arising after the splintering of the Holy Roman Empire in 1790s. The Kingdom of Prussia was the hegemon of the Zollverein, which gradually included most German states and later also had agreements with non-German allies. Importantly, the Zollverein was established as a full customs union between fully independent political units and states, without attempting to move towards political integration or unity. Subsequently, however, the German Empire (1871-1918) assumed control over the customs union, which meant that economic and political integration eventually became more difficult to separate.

In this context it is important to recognize that the dream of a united Europe has a long history, with diverse intellectual roots, and dating back to ancient Greece. The many and diverse 'early' visions and projects for European cooperation and unity were made up of divergent views about the importance of culture and identity, security, political economy, and law. Some ideas about European unity were inward-looking and concerned with intra-European aspects, while others were outward-looking and usually concerned with protecting Europe from the outside world. In contrast to most subsequent theories of the old regionalism phase, these early ideas rarely perceived a competition between the unification of Europe and the strengthening of the nation-state. Jönsson, Tägil and Törnqvist underline the pluralism of perspectives in European region-building:

> [...] hundreds of plans for the peaceful unification of Europe have been presented throughout history. In the sixteenth century, humanists of various nationalities demanded that the European rules unite, primarily as a response to the then imminent Turkish threat. In the late seventh century, an outline was drawn from a European league of nations. Some hundred years later, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that a lasting peace in Europe required a federation of states based on the principles of international law. In the revolutionary year 1848, the idea of a unified Europe gained a broader following. French writer Victor Hugo advocated for the creation of a United States of Europe based on political democracy and respects for the rights of man. The outbreak of world war in 1914 shattered any such hopes, however. Between the First and the Second World Wars, new plans were drafted for integrating Europe (Jönsson et al. 2000: 22-23).

There are thus deep roots behind the many plans for European unity and integration that after the end of the Second World War lead to the formation of the European Communities (EC) and other regionalist projects in Europe. At least in the comparative and theoretical discussions, these historical trajectories are often overlooked.

In the last few centuries, most of the European nation-states, especially the powerful ones, were also colonial powers. Colonialism influenced and shaped ideas about region-building and regionalism both in Europe and in the periphery, and these trajectories continue to influence more recent regionalist ideas and projects, not only in the post-colonial world but also in contemporary Europe. European colonial empires were sometimes organized regionally, but anti-colonial struggles also took a regional form.

Africa is a case in point. The 'scramble for Africa' and the attempt to gain control over the mineral resources had strong regional implications, which has influenced contemporary forms of organization and ideas of regionalism on the continent. It is in the colonial quest for mineral exploitation that we find the link between

state-building and the temporal 'beginning' of regions such as Southern Africa (Niemann 2001: 69). During the late 1800s, the British vision of Southern Africa became the dominant one. After establishing control over the Cape colony, many neighboring areas were subsequently annexed as parts of the British Empire. The British South Africa Company (BSAC), founded by Cecil Rhodes, was granted the charter to operate in a large territory north of the Limpopo, and gradually expanded between 1889 and 1923. It is evident from its dealings with other colonial powers that Britain perceived the region as a single entity rather than as "parts making up a whole" (Poku 2001: 20).

The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is the world's oldest existing customs union with its origins dating back to 1889, to the Customs Union Convention between the British Colony of Cape of Good Hope and the Orange Free State Boer Republic. With the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the agreement was revised and also extended to the British High Commission Territories (HCTs), that is Basutoland (present-day Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Swaziland, and in effect to South West Africa (Namibia). The founding of the Union of South Africa shifted British attention to the North, and Britain pushed through a plan for the Central African Federation of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and Nyasaland (Malawi) in order to counter the rise of Afrikaner power in South Africa (and it had no consideration for African interests). The Federation lasted for ten years. After its collapse in 1963 Southern Rhodesia forged closer ties with South Africa, particularly through military cooperation, and through erecting similar race policies. Up until the 1980s and even into the 1990s, politics in Southern Africa were dominated by the struggle between the apartheid and the anti-apartheid blocs. Although apartheid was not present in East Africa, there are similar links between colonialism and regionalism – for instance, the current East African Community (EAC) has its origins in the East African Customs Union (1922), which was followed by the East African High Commission (1948), and the East African Common Services Organization (1961).

The French colonial empire was rather different from the British. Even if the French empire was centralized, the French system and its assimilation policy allowed and promoted a considerable degree of horizontal integration among the various colonies and also contained a certain degree of regional colonial administration. The 'special' relationship between France and the Francophone African colonies/countries has worked both ways. On the one hand, it has sustained French imperial dreams, and, on the other hand, the former colonies have their Francophone legacy to foster regionalism among themselves (and sometimes as a counterweight against the hegemonic aspirations of Nigeria). The CFA franc zone (CFA) was a colonial construct dating back to 1945, and it still impacts on regionalization in contemporary Africa. Other still existing economic integration arrangements in Francophone Africa, such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), also have colonial and imperial origins.

Latin America provides another example of the deep roots and trajectories of regionalism (Fawcett 2005). The struggle for independence in Latin America in the early 19th century evoked a sense of unity, leading up to Pan-Americanism and inspiring regionalism throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Simon Bolívar (1783-1830) played a key role in Latin Americas struggle for independence from the Spanish Empire as well as in the effort to create a league of American republics, with a common military, a mutual defense pact, and a supranational parliamentary assembly. Bolívar's vision at the Congress of Panama in 1826 never succeeded, particularly due to the growing strength of Latin American military nationalism and national rivalry during large parts of the 19th century. Regional cooperation returned to the forefront at the

First International Conference of American States held in Washington, D.C. in 1889 and in 1890, when 18 nations founded the International Union of American Republics (later the Pan-American Union) and decided to meet periodically. There is thus a direct link from these Pan-American conferences to today's Organization of American States (OAS), which is the oldest (existing) regional organization in the world. Hence, regionalism in Latin America has deep roots and many visionaries; politicians and intellectuals in Latin America throughout the post-independence period have considered regionalism a source of strength (Fawcett 2012).

Other pan-continental/regional movements – such as Pan-Europeanism, Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism, and Pan-Arabism – also emerged around this time, in the late 1800s and the first part of the 1900s. These pan-regional movements usually were motivated by a mixture of geo-political, socio-economic, cultural (sometimes even racial), and, to some extent, functional beliefs and goals. They were multidimensional and reflected shared ideas and goals of political and intersocietal unity rather than intergovernmental regionalism in a more narrow sense (Acharya 2012: 5). The pan-regionalist movements took somewhat different shapes in different regions, depending on the historical context that included the character of colonialism and external domination, but all of them "offer vital insights into regionalism's trajectory past and present" (Fawcett 2015: 13).

3. Old Regionalism

Voluntary and comprehensive regionalism for many scholars is predominantly a post-World War II phenomenon. It emerged in Western Europe in the late-1940s, subsequently spreading to the developing world. Old regionalism lost much of its dynamism in Europe in the early 1970s and gradually, also in the developing world. As will become evident below, it is relevant to try separating the European-centered debate from the debate in the developing world.

3.1 Regional Integration in Europe and Beyond

Old regionalism has its roots in the devastating experience of inter-war nationalism and World War II. It is therefore closely linked to the discussion about 'regional integration' in Europe, in particular to the formation of the European Communities. In contrast to earlier discussions that centered on mercantilism and competing alliances, post-War scholars usually viewed the (Westphalian) nation-state as the problem rather than the solution, and the purpose of regional integration was to achieve and consolidate peace and stability. Immediately after the Second World War, there was a lot of discussion about European regionalism, not least about reconstruction and reconciliation between France and Germany. A series of initiatives were launched, which resulted in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. The long-term goal was more ambitious, and in 1958 the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were integrated into the EC through the Treaty of Rome.

The most relevant theories – which explained these developments in the European context – were federalism, functionalism, neofunctionalism and transactionalism, and intergovernmentalism (Rosamond 2000). Federalism, which inspired the pioneers of European integration, was less a theory than a political program; it was skeptical of the nation-state, although its project was in fact to create a new kind of 'state'. Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, both Italian anti-fascist communists, drafted the 'Ventotene Manifesto', which later lead to the European Federalist Movement. Spinelli continued to be one of the figures of European federalism until his death in 1986, but even so there was no obvious theorist associated with federalism.

Functionalism was primarily a strategy (or a normative method) designed to build peace, constructed around the proposition that the provision of common needs and functions can unite people across state borders. This school of thought was strongly associated with the works of David Mitrany (1943). In the functionalist view, form was supposed to follow function, whereas for the federalists it was primarily form that mattered (especially a constitution). Functional cooperation should concentrate on technical and basic functional programs and projects within clearly defined sectors, led by functional international agencies. Usually, the nation-state should be bypassed, and *international* cooperation was preferred to *regional* cooperation. Mitrany criticized both federalism and neofunctionalism on the basis that both were primarily based on territory rather than function. He saw territoriality as part of the Westphalian logic, which was taken to imply conflict and war, although Mitrany considered the ECSC an acceptable organization.

Neofunctionalism enjoyed a great standing during the 1960s. Its central figure was Ernst Haas, who challenged the functionalists and claimed a greater concern for centers of power (Haas 1958, 1964). Haas in fact theorized the 'community method' pioneered by Jean Monnet (a French diplomat, considered one of the chief architects of the EC). Even if the outcome of this method could be a federation, it was not to be constructed through constitutional design.

'Regional integration' was crucial in neofunctional theorizing, and much of the debate on old regionalism in Europe was centered on this concept. It was famously defined by Haas (1958: 16) as "the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdictions over the pre-existing national states". Regional integration was seen as a path along which 'progress' could be measured (Haas 1961). Later, Haas (1970: 607-608, 610), re-defined it as

> [t]he study of regional integration [which] is concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge, and mix with their neighbors so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflict between themselves.

Neofunctionalists emphasized the deliberate design of regional institutions, which were seen as the most effective means for solving common problems. These institutions and supranational authorities were to be initiated by the states, but then the regional bureaucrats, interest groups and self-organized interests would become important actors in the process. The regional institutions were, in turn, instrumental to the creation of functional, political and cultivated spill-over, which would ultimately lead to a redefinition of group identity 'beyond the nation-state' and around the regional unit (Haas 1964; Hurrell 1995: 59).

Karl Deutsch's 'security communities' approach was also very influential in the further development of so-called regional integration theory. Deutsch et al. (1957: 5) define the 'security community' as "a group of people which has become 'integrated'" and 'integration' is defined as "the attainment, within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a 'long' time, dependable expectations of 'peaceful change' among its population". Members of a security community believe "that they have come to agreement on at least this one point: that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of 'peaceful change'". An 'amalgamated community' is characterized by a political union or common government (that is there is a "formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit"), whereas a 'pluralistic community' is characterized by the fact that countries retain their sovereignty (that is the legal independence of separate governments) (Deutsch et al. 1957: 6).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the neofunctional description (and prescription) became increasingly remote from the empirical world, now dominated by Charles de Gaulle's nationalism. Stanley Hoffmann (1966) became the key figure of the intergovernmental approach to regional integration. In contrast to neofunctionalists, Hoffmann explained that integration would not spread from low politics (economics) to the sphere of high politics (security). Regional integration happened only as long as it coincided with the national interest and "by taking along the nation with its baggage of memories and problems" (Hoffmann 1966: 867). The image of the EC began to diverge.

Gradually, European integration began to deviate more and more from neofunctionalist theorizing. Haas responded to critics by labeling the study of regional integration "pre-theory" (on the basis that there was no clear idea about dependent and independent variables), then referred to the field in terms of "obsolescence", and ended up suggesting that the study of regional integration should cease to be a subject in its own right (Haas 1975). The study of regions and regional integration was gradually deserted in favor of wider and non-territorial logics and patterns of integration and interdependence. This was again a new turn. The global context was not really considered by old regionalism theory (at least not the neofunctionalists), concerned as it was with regional integration as a planned merger of national economies through cooperation among a group of nation-states.

The ontology of regional integration was heatedly discussed in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Joseph Nye referred to a "Babylonian' conceptual confusion" (1968: 27). This led Haas (1970: 610) to make a plea that "[s]emantic confusion about 'integration' must be limited even if it cannot be eliminated". Puchala famously used the fable of the elephant and the blind men, complaining that

> [m]ore than fifteen years of defining, redefining, refining, modelling and theorizing have failed to generate satisfactory conceptualizations of exactly what it is we are talking about when we refer to 'international integration' and exactly what it is we are trying to learn when we study this phenomenon (Puchala 1971: 267).

The conceptual discussions were sometimes framed in terms of finding the 'best' definition for a given phenomenon (especially 'regional integration'). Yet many controversies could have been overcome if scholars had appreciated that they were not, as Puchala revealed, dealing with the same 'part' of the elephant. Indeed,

some scholars were focused on regional sub-systems, regions or regional cooperation while others were more focused on particular definitions of regional integration and regional organizations (Thompson 1973: 95).

For instance, regions and regional sub-systems generated some interest in the era of old regionalism. Binder (1958), for example, used the term 'subordinate international system' to capture the position of the Middle East in the global system of international relations. Inspired by the systems approach, a series of other scholars in the 1960s and 1970s tried to define regions 'scientifically'. For instance, Cantori and Spiegel (1970: 6-7) identified the following characteristics of a region: geographic proximity, common bonds (historical, social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic), a sense of identity, and international interactions; whereas Russett (1967: 11) emphasized geographical proximity, social and cultural homogeneity, political attitudes or external behavior, political institutions, and economic interdependence. Neofunctionalists, such as Haas (1970: 612), criticized the regional systems approach as being merely descriptive and stressed that the concerns of 'regional integration' scholars (especially neofunctionalists) were different from those of the regional systems scholars.

The early debate was always centered on Europe, and Europe was in some respects treated as a single case. Gradually the comparative element in the field grew stronger and some of the most respected (mainly neofunctionalist) theorists of their time also conducted comparisons. For instance, Ernst Haas, Philippe Schmitter and Sydney Dell studied regional integration (or the lack of it) in Latin America (Haas/Schmitter 1964; Haas 1967; Schmitter 1970; Dell 1966). Amitai Etzioni compared the United Arab Republic, the Federation of West Indies, the Nordic Association, and the European Economic Community (Etzioni 1965). Joseph Nye studied East Africa and conducted comparisons of the Arab League, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Nye 1970, 1971).

Even if many of these and other like-minded scholars were conscious of their own Eurocentrism, they searched above all for those 'background conditions', 'functional equivalents' and 'spill-over' effects that were derived from the study of Europe. As Breslin et al. (2002: 2) point out, they "used the European experience as a basis for the production of generalizations about the prospects for regional integration elsewhere". This resulted in difficulties in identifying comparable cases, or anything that corresponded to their definition of 'regional integration'. The treatment of European integration as the primary case or 'model' of regional integration still dominates many of the more recent studies of regionalism and regional integration, which is an important part of "the problem of comparison" within this research area (de Lombaerde et al. 2010). Nonetheless, the rigor with which earlier theorists undertook comparative analysis can serve as an inspiration for the development of a more genuinely 'comparative' regionalism.

3.2 Old Regionalism in the Developing World: Development and Nation-building

There was also an old (or classical) debate in the developing world, especially in Latin America and Africa, but to some extent also in Asia and other developing regions. As previously indicated, the discussion about regionalism in the developing world was closely linked to colonialism/anti-colonialism and the quest to facilitate economic development in the newly independent nation-states. Many of the discussions about

regionalism in the developing world were heavily influenced by the structuralist tradition of economic development, pioneered by Gunnar Myrdal, Arthur Lewis, and Raúl Prebisch. In sharp contrast to the European debate, which focused heavily on regional integration, the keywords here were development, state-promoted industrialization and nation-building, first and foremost through protectionism and import-substitution.

The Latin American structuralist discussion about underdevelopment reflected specific economic experiences in various countries, particularly in terms of trade problems. The depression of the 1930s also had severe impact on Latin American development, creating pressure for change. Encouraged by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and its dynamic Executive Secretary, Raúl Prebisch, the vision was to create an enlarged economic space in Latin America in order to enhance import substitution regionally when it became exhausted at the national level. Liberalized intra-regional trade in combination with regional protectionism seemed to offer large economies of scale and wider markets, which could serve as stimulus to industrialization, economic growth, and investment (Prebisch 1959).

From this perspective, the rationale of regional cooperation and integration among less developed countries was not to be found in functional cooperation or marginal economic change within the existing structure, but rather, through the fostering of 'structural transformation' and the stimulation of productive capacities (industrialization), whereby investment and trading opportunities were being created. The structuralist school thus shifted its focus away from economic integration as means for peace and political unification, to one of regional economic cooperation/integration as means for economic development and state-formation. The dependent variable, as well as the underlying conditions for regionalism, was so different that it called for a different theory, according to which Europe and the developing world were not comparable cases (Axline 1994: 180).

This type of regionalism resulted in the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) in Montevideo in 1960. LAFTA was a comprehensive and continental project, and included all countries on the South American continent plus Mexico. However, in spite of some early progress and lively theoretical discussion, which has become internationally known as central to the history of economic thought the old regionalism in Latin America made little economic impact and was never implemented on a larger scale.

The limited track-record of regional integration in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s was due to internal conflicts, a general failure among states to cooperate, and the whole structure of dependence. The member countries of the various partly overlapping regional schemes were politically and/or economically unstable and not willing to or capable of pursuing cooperation. The objective of a Latin American free trade area never materialized, inter alia due to extremely cumbersome and unfruitful tariff reduction negotiations. Too many exceptions in combination with the continued protectionism against third countries only led to economic stagnation. Furthermore, the smaller member countries claimed that LAFTA mainly benefited the 'Big Three', Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, and opted for a more radical and ambitious strategy, with focus on a jointly planned industrialization strategy. This was the basic foundation for the establishment of the more radical Andean Pact in 1969, but the highly stated ambitions were never implemented. Military dictatorships were established throughout the continent during the 1970s, and these regimes were poor partners in regional cooperation schemes. The return to democracy in the mid-1980s subsequently provided a big boost for the new regionalism in Latin America starting in the late 1980s.

External factors and external dependence were also important, especially the relationship with the USA. As long as the USA was a global superpower, there was little room for maneuver for Latin American states. On the other hand, there was very little positive interest for Latin America on the part of the USA. Radical development models were unacceptable as they were interpreted as an advancement for 'the other side' in the Cold War. The only regionalism that was accepted was thus 'hegemonic regionalism' (which has some similarities with imperial and colonial regionalism). The OAS, for instance, has been perceived more as an instrument for US policies than a genuinely regional body (Frohmann 2000).

African debates about regionalism at the time were clearly influenced by the intellectual debates in Latin America, but to some extent also the ones in Europe – as seen in debates in the establishment of the OAU between the federalist Casablanca group (led by Kwame N'krumah) and the functionalist Monrovia group. The general ideological foundation of regional cooperation and integration in Africa is first and foremost formulated in the visions and series of treaties developed within the framework of what was then the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), such as the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991). In the past the pan-African visions stressed collective self-reliance, and introverted and mercantilist strategies based on protectionism and import-substituting industrialization in a similar manner to regionalism in Latin America – what Mittelman refers to as "autocentric regionalism" (Mittelman 2000). However, few of the grandiose plans materialized.

A large number of state-led regional frameworks and organizations were created in Africa after independence (Söderbaum 1995). As noted above, some had colonial origins (CFA, EAC, SACU), whereas other regional organizations were explicitly designed in order to work against dependence on colonial powers and the rest of the world. Even if the relevance and efficacy of the OAU has been widely discussed, it cannot be denied that the organization was important for coordinating a common African stand against colonialism and apartheid.

The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) (the predecessor of today's SADC) was also created in order to work against apartheid and external dependence. SADCC was established in 1980 and it was deliberately designed in order to *avoid* trade and market integration (according to the famous Balassa model (1961) that dominated discussions about economic regionalism during the time), claiming that in the underdeveloped world the development of the productive capacities follow rather than precede rising levels of intra-regional trade. On paper, the SADCC was heavily influenced by Latin American tradition and favored a strategy of *dirigist* import substitution industrialization coupled with the equitable distribution of costs and benefits (as opposed to distribution according to comparative advantages as emphasized in neoclassical regional economic integration). This was an important case even if SADCC's practice was different: in reality, its role was limited to being a project coordination and implementation scheme, funded mainly by European donors. The fundamental problem with all radical and structuralist regionalist strategies was that they became politically irrelevant due to the strengthening of neoliberalism and structural adjustment throughout the 1980s. Hence, the ideology and institutions of regionalism in the developing world were not in harmony with the global political economy and the world order context.

As far as Asia is concerned, the meaning of regionalism changed in relation to the question of what sub-regions to include and exclude, what dimensions of regionalism to investigate (such as security, economics,

politics, and culture), and which particular theoretical perspectives to employ. A considerable body of literature was concerned with the study of ASEAN, which was established in 1967. A major reason for this emphasis appears to be that ASEAN was one of the few sustainable regional organizations in the larger East/Southeast Asian region. ASEAN was understood as a joint attempt by a rather narrow but strong political elite to consolidate the nation-states and to enhance stability in recent but shaky state forma-tions. Hence, as with most other regional debates in the then developing world, the primary aims were state-building and nation-building. Even if the treaties did not mention security explicitly, communism was the primary threat, irrespective of whether it was internal or external. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, there were many 'politically steered' policy declarations and attempts to create joint industrial ventures and to achieve preferential trading schemes. For the most part, the development impact of these attempts was low, and during this time the economic development in Southeast Asia can hardly be attributed to the policies of ASEAN as a regional organization. Subsequently, ASEAN has consolidated and to some extent, even flourished as a regional organization, a fact analyzed during the new regionalism.

4. New Regionalism

The 1970s and first half of the 1980s was a period of 'Eurosclerosis' within Europe. Regionalism in the rest of the world was also in a state of oblivion. However, the prospects of the fall of the Berlin Wall together with the 1985 White Paper on the internal market and the Single European Act resulted in a new dynamic process of European integration. This was also the start of what has often been referred to as 'new region-alism' on a global scale. The new regionalism referred to a number of new trends and developments, such as the spectacular increase in the number of regional trade agreements, an externally oriented and less protectionist type of regionalism, an anti-hegemonic type of regionalism which emerged from within the regions themselves instead of being controlled by the superpowers, the rise of a more multi-dimensional and pluralistic type of regionalism, which was not primarily centered around trading schemes or security cooperation and with a more varied institutional design, and the increasing importance of a range of busi-ness and civil society actors in regionalization (Bøås et al. 1999; de Melo/Panagaryia 1995; Fawcett/Hurrell 1995; Hettne et al. 1999; Mansfield/Milner 1997; Schulz et al. 2001).

Even if an exogenous perspective also existed during the old debate (especially in realist thought and in the developing world), it was further developed under new regionalism. Many scholars emphasized the fact that the new wave of regionalism needed to be related to the multitude of often inter-related structural changes of and in the global system in the post-Cold War era, such as the end of bipolarity, the intensifi-cation of globalization, the recurrent fears over the stability of the multilateral trading order, the restruc-turing of the nation-state, and the critique of neoliberal economic development and political systems in developing as well as post-communist countries (cf. Gamble/Payne 1996; Hettne et al. 1999).

The increasing multidimensionality of regionalism has resulted in an expanded research agenda and a pro-liferation of theories and perspectives, such as varieties of neorealist and neoliberal institutional theories, new trade theories and new institutionalist theories, multilevel governance approaches, a variety of con-structivist and discursive approaches, security complex theory, and assorted critical and new regionalism

approaches (Laursen 2003; Wiener/Diez 2003; Söderbaum/Shaw 2003). This richness of theorizing, both in Europe and in the rest of the world, can be seen as intellectual progress. Yet, there was also a significant degree of confusion and rivalry between different theoretical standpoints and regional and thematic specializations. The fragmentation was enhanced by the fact that many scholars did not share the same understanding of what constituted 'good' theory (or even what was theory at all). Some theories were strictly causal and 'objective', in which 'facts' and 'theories' should be separated, while others were based on radically different meta-theoretical foundations. This divide was closely related to the distinction between 'rationalist' and 'reflectivist' approaches to international theory, with (various types of) social constructivism occupying the "middle ground" (Adler 1997).

Clearly, during this period the study of regionalism was dominated by a variety of rationalist theories (assorted types of realist, liberal and liberal institutionalist, and liberal intergovernmentalist approaches; see Laursen 2003; Mansfield/Milner 1997; Mattli 1999; Moravcsik 1993). In fact, this is one way to define what is 'mainstream' in the study of regionalism and, from this point of view, the difference between old and new regionalism is less clear. Furthermore, even if rationalists disagreed about power versus the independent effects of institutions, the various rationalist approaches moved closer together during the 1990s than what was the case during the old regionalism. Not only do rationalists agree broadly on a common epistemology and a set of core ontological assumptions, they also share a similar research agenda, which is focused on the origins, shape, and consequences of assorted regional organizations and arrangements. This agenda circled around questions such as: Why do states choose to enter regional arrangements? Why has integration proceeded more rapidly in some policy domains than it has in others? What institutional forms are most effective? When and why did arrangements deepen, and with what effects on trade, finance, development, security and so on?

Another main characteristic of the field since the 1990s was the emergence of a multitude of constructivist and reflectivist approaches to regionalism that challenged core rationalist assumptions, such as the separation of subject and object, of fact and value, the state-centered ontology of most rationalist approaches as well as the role of norms and identities in the formation of informal and formal regions. Some constructivists first and foremost were engaged in a debate with the rationalists and mainstream discourses (see Adler 1997; Katzenstein 1996; Acharya 2004), whereas others were engaged with more radical and critical approaches. In the former case, it can be somewhat difficult to draw a line between constructivism and reflectivism (Neumann 1994; Hettne/Söderbaum 2000; Paasi 2001; Söderbaum 2004).

Reflectivist approaches had a particular concern for structural transformation as well as for whom, and for what purpose, regionalism is put into practice. Many critical scholars in the 1990s investigated whether the new regionalism represented the "return of the political" in the context of economic globalization. Some were skeptical and argued that regionalism primarily was a manifestation of economic globalization and prevailing forms of hegemony (Gamble/Payne 1996) whereas many others were more optimistic about the effects of regionalism (Hettne et al. 1999).

Furthermore, whereas most (but not all) rationalist scholarship focused on pre-given regional delimitations and regional organizations, reflectivists and constructivists, in contrast, were more concerned with how regions are constituted and constructed (Murphy 1991; Neumann 1994; Hettne/Söderbaum 2000). One

of the more influential approaches, the new regionalism approach (NRA), claims that there are no 'natural' regions, but these are made, remade, and unmade – intentionally or non-intentionally – in the process of global transformation, by collective human action and identity formation (Söderbaum 2004). Since regions are social constructions, none are 'given', and there are no given regionalist interests either, but instead the interests and identities are shaped in the process of interaction and inter-subjective understanding. Compared to the mainstream and rationalist research agenda, this type of theorizing leads to different answers and methodologies regarding why and how regions are formed and consolidated, by whom and for what purpose.

Iver B. Neumann's (1994, 2003) region-building approach (RBA) is rather similar to the NRA. It also rejects fixed and pre-given definitions of regions as well as the territorial trap of the nation-state. The RBA is based on the notion that regions are preceded by region-builders – that is, political actors who, as part of some political project, see it in their interest to imagine and construct a region. All theories make assumptions about what a region is, but according to Neumann, the mainstream and rationalist approaches tend to neglect the "politics of defining and redefining the region" (Neumann 2003: 166). The point is that "this is an inherently political act, and it must therefore be reflectively acknowledged and undertaken as such" (Neumann 2003: 166). In this sense the RBA seeks to go to the root of where, by whom, and for whom region-building statements and strategies are formulated and made relevant, in other words: whose region is being constructed.

Issues about the definition and construction of region were closely related to agency and actors. One major point of contestation during new regionalism concerned the relative importance of regionalism as a states-led project as opposed to regionalization resulting from "the growth of societal integration within a region and the often undirected processes of social and economic interaction" (Hurrell 1995: 39). While most scholars clearly emphasized the importance of states-led and formal regionalism, particularly new regionalism/regionalisms approaches underlined the importance of non-state actors. As pointed out by Bøås et al. (2003: 201), "regionalism is clearly a political project, but it is obviously not necessarily state-led, as states are not the only political actor around […] we clearly believe that, within each regional project (official or not), several competing regionalizing actors with different regional visions and ideas coexist" (see also Schulz et al. 2001).

Indeed, contrary to the exaggerated focus during old regionalism on top-down and formal state-driven regionalist projects ('regional integration'), it was clear that also non-state actors played a vital role in new regionalism. Scholars pointed out that business interests and multinationals not only operated on the global sphere, but also created regionalized patterns of economic activity (Rugman 2005). Some scholars claimed that the private economic forces were reacting faster, or at least more effectively, than state actors to the new situation and the more liberalized political economy (Hettne et al. 1999). Within Europe there was an intense debate about the role of business actors and interests in the creation of the European common market, resulting in an intense discussion about whether market-based economic integration preceded or followed policy-led regionalism (Sandholtz/Stone-Sweet 1998). The role of US-based business interests in the creation of NAFTA is well-documented as well. Discussions about regionalism in East Asia emphasized that large Japanese *keiretsu* and TNCs, smaller ethnically or family-based networks and businesses developed sophisticated regional trading, investment, technology, and production strategies. In Southern Africa, for instance, the South African firms have quite sophisticated regional strategies in such fields as food and beverage, trade and commerce, mining, banking and financial services, and the industrial sectors.

The Nigerian, Senegalese, and Lebanese business, trading and smuggling networks operating all over West Africa, is a well-known feature of that particular region. In other developing regions, there was also great variety of private and ethnic businesses and networks, both big and small, which have well-developed regional strategies and often operated beyond the frameworks of state-led regionalist projects (Bach 1999; Perkman/Sum 2001; Söderbaum/Taylor 2008).

Civil society was hitherto largely neglected in the study of regionalism. New regionalism scholars pointed to an increasing relevance and strength of civil society regionalization around the world (Söderbaum 2007 ; also see Acharya 2004). Civil society regionalization emerged for a range of different reasons, such as functional problem-solving and service delivery, a 'need' to transcend the structures and boundaries of individual nation-states, sharing of information, and learning. The point was not that national civil societies were disappearing, but rather that they became intertwined on a regional basis and to some extent became integrated within an emerging global civil society.

A final distinction in this context is between structural and macro-oriented approaches compared to the agency- and micro-oriented ones (Neumann 2003). To some extent this distinction obviates or at least cuts across the rationalist-reflectivist divide. Some scholars are particularly concerned with historical structures and the construction of world orders, while other analysts are more interested in the particularities of agencies and lived social spaces. There is no need to be dogmatic about how to balance structure and agency (macro versus micro; outside-in versus inside-out), because to a large extent it is closely related to differences in meta-theoretical position as well as the nature of the research question. Structural analysis may, for instance, be more plausible when the research focus is put on the role of regions in world order transformation, whereas a stronger emphasis on agency is necessary for a better understanding/explanation of the specificities and details of agents and micro-processes on the ground. Here it is important to recognize that different assumptions may be chosen to illuminate different aspects of regional politics, and different perspectives and their concomitant narratives often tend to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive (Neumann 2003).

5. Comparative Regionalism

One of the main advantages of a long time perspective is the revelation of intellectual richness, which also makes it possible to trace the various ways in which earlier ideas about regions and region-building (sometimes) influenced more recent ideas and projects. The fact that others early on elaborated many important ideas and theories of regionalism has been ignored for too long by too many.

The inclusion of the section on early regionalism serves to draw attention to the deep roots of and diverse trajectories of regionalism 'beyond' the era of old regionalism. Among other things, early regionalism underlines the interaction rather than the competition between regionalist and statist ideas, and at least in some respects this resembles more recent debates about multilayered global governance. Early regionalism also draws attention to the various pan-regionalist movements that developed then, usually consisting of a mixture of geo-political, cultural and functional beliefs. Some of these pan-regionalist ideas continue

to influence contemporary regionalist projects, especially in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and to some extent in Asia.

Apart from early regionalism, this chapter identifies three subsequent phases in the scholarly development of the field: old regionalism, new regionalism, and comparative regionalism, which is the current phase. This final section defines the meaning of comparative regionalism by contrasting it to old and new regionalism.

As stated by Hettne (2005), after two to three decades of 'new' regionalism it is now time to move 'beyond the new regionalism'. It is evident that something has happened with the nature of regionalism itself since around the turn of the millennium or the mid-2000s, but also with the way that regionalism is being studied. The novel characteristic of the most recent phase of regionalism cannot be found so much in the establishment of new regional organizations, but rather in the expansion, deepening, and widening of regionalism.

One important difference between the new and the most recent phase of regionalism is that during the 1980s and 1990s both the prevalence and the relevance of regionalism were sometimes questioned. By contrast, today it is difficult to dispute the increasing salience of regions and regionalism. Indeed, regionalism has become a structural component of today's global politics. Some observers even claim that today's world order is a regional world order. Peter Katzenstein (2005: i), for instance, rejects the "purportedly stubborn persistence of the nation-state or the inevitable march of globalization", arguing instead that we are approaching a 'world of regions'. Similarly, Amitav Acharya emphasizes the "emerging regional architecture of world politics" (2007) and the construction of "regional worlds" (2014). Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver (2003: 20) speak about a "global order of strong regions" (see also Van Langenhove 2011). The fundamental point is not that regionalism necessarily dominates global politics in all respects, but rather that "regions are now everywhere across the globe and are increasingly fundamental to the functioning of all aspects of world affairs from trade to conflict management, and can even be said to now constitute world order" (Fawn 2009: 5).

The fact that something has happened with regionalism since the mid-2000s, as well as signs of its increasing diversity, is evidenced by the rich set of new (partly overlapping, partly competing) concepts and labels, such as "post-hegemonic regionalism" (Riggirozzi/Tussie 2012; Telò 2013), "post-neoliberal regionalism" (Riggirozzi 2012), "heterodox regionalism" (Vivares 2013), "differentiated integration" (Leuffen et al. 2013), "porous regional orders" (Katzenstein, 2005), "regional worlds" (Acharya 2014), "converging regions" (Lenze/ Schriwer 2014), "networking region" (Baldersheim 2011), "beyond regionalism" (Harders/Legrenzi 2008), and "persistent permeability" (Salloukh/Brynen 2004). These and similar concepts and labels are all signs of the increasing diversity and complexity of regionalism. Even if the new regionalism did emphasize multidimensionality, there are many new ideas about the changing nature of regionalism that take us 'beyond' it.

One of the original intentions of distinguishing between old and new regionalism was to draw attention to the different world order context shaping regionalism in the late 1980s and 1990s, in order to pinpoint the 'new' features of regionalism in contradistinction to the 'old' characteristics (Hettne 1994, 1999). For the same reasons, one relevant strategy to understand the difference between new regionalism and the most recent phase is therefore to understand the changing world order context of regionalism. It is evident that today's world order context is markedly different from the one of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when new regionalism emerged. In contrast to a world order dominated by the recent fall of the Berlin Wall, the

end of the Cold War, neoliberalism and economic globalization, current regionalism is shaped by a world order characterized by many diverse and also contradictory trends and processes, such as the war on terror, the responsibility to intervene and protect, a multi-layered or "multiplex" world order, recurrent financial crises across the world, the persistent pattern of overlapping and criss-crossing regional and interregional projects and processes in most parts of the world, and not least the rise of the BRICS and other emerging powers (Acharya 2014; Shaw et al. 2011; Fioramonti 2012, 2014; Van Langenhove 2011).

One of the core issues focused upon during the new regionalism was the relationship between globalization and regionalism. Even if this issue has certainly not disappeared, the global-regional nexus has changed its meaning over the last decade. While new regionalism focused on the relationship between globalization and regionalism, often in the form of whether the two processes reinforced or competed against each other, current debates about regionalism are focusing on the rising complexity of regionalism and by multifold interactions between state and non-state actors, institutions and processes at a variety of interacting levels, ranging from the bilateral to the regional, interregional, and multilateral/global (Baert et al. 2014; Shaw et al. 2011). This also means that current regionalism has moved beyond intense and often dichotomous debates about whether regionalism is formal or informal and driven by state or non-state actors. Scholars still disagree about the relative importance of state and non-state actors in specific cases, but it is no longer possible to question the multiplicities of state and non-state agencies within a variety of modes of regional governance, regional networks, and institutional forms interacting in complex ways with global governance (Armstrong et al. 2011; Fioramonti 2014; Shaw et al. 2011).

Theoretical and methodological dialogue is another emerging feature of the most recent phase in the study of regionalism. Whereas the new regionalism was characterized by fragmentation and a series of methodological and paradigmatic rivalries, regionalism is being consolidated as a field of study. During new regionalism there was a general lack of dialogue between academic disciplines and regional specializations (European integration, Latin American, Asian, and African regionalism) as well as between theoretical traditions (rationalism, institutionalism, constructivism, critical and postmodern approaches). There was also thematic fragmentation in the sense that various forms of regionalism, such as economic, security, and environmental regionalism, were only rarely related to one another. Such fragmentation undermined the further generation of cumulative knowledge as well as theoretical and methodological innovation and consolidation. It also lead to unproductive contestation, among both scholars and policy makers, about the meaning of regionalism, its causes and effects, how it should be studied, what to compare and how, and not least, what the costs and benefits of regionalism and regional integration were. Today's regionalism is characterized by a changing intellectual landscape of regionalism, with increased dialogue between theoretical approaches but also the increasing acceptance that a multitude of scientific standpoints and perspectives are necessary and plausible (see Söderbaum 2009; De Lombaerde/Söderbaum 2013). A considerable amount of the confusion and trench-war surrounding the study of new regionalism in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s has been abandoned or solved.

From a methodological point of view, it can be argued that the consolidation of comparative regionalism constitutes one of the core characteristics of the current phase of regionalism; perhaps its most important (De Lombaerde/Söderbaum 2013; Warleigh-Lack/Van Langenhove 2011). According to Acharya (2012), comparative regionalism is indeed "a field whose time has come". A great deal of research during the new

regionalism was based on case studies. Even if attention certainly was given to comparison, too many comparisons were either parallel case studies, or too rigid quantitative studies that usually failed to take the historical and regional context into consideration. We are now witnessing an increasing creativity in the way regions are compared across time and space. The increasing cross-fertilization and interaction between students of European integration and regionalism elsewhere is particularly important, not least because this promises to lead to less Eurocentrism in the field. A range of previously compared regions and regional frameworks now are being subjected to fresh and intriguing new comparisons. Acharya is correct in that the "global heritage" of regionalism needs to be acknowledged: "ideas and literature that constitute comparative regionalism come from and have been enriched by contributions from many regions, including Latin America, Asia, North America, the Middle East, Africa and of course Europe" (2012: 12). It must also be recognized that our understanding of regions and regionalism has changed during recent decades, which is good news for comparative regionalism as well as for attempts to move away from narrow and conventional understandings of European integration. "While the contemporary interest in comparing regions and regionalisms may not be completely new, it is different from older approaches. Our understanding of what makes regions has changed with social constructivist and critical theoretical approaches that have led to less behavioural and more nuanced, complex, contested and fluid understandings of regions" (Acharya 2012: 3). Still, all is not well with the study of regionalism and it remains necessary to deepen the comparative element of regionalism without becoming trapped in either parochialism or a false universalism (usually Eurocentrism).

The preferred version of comparative regionalism is eclectic and inclusive. Such eclectic perspective should enable area studies, comparative politics and international studies to engage in a more fruitful dialogue, and through that process overcome the fragmentation in the field of regionalism that still remain. It should also enable continued cross-fertilization between different regional debates and specializations (African, American, Asian, Caribbean, and European forms of regionalism). Such eclectic perspective will also enhance a dialogue about the fundamentals of comparative analysis, for example, what constitute comparable cases, and the many different forms, methods, and design of comparative analysis.

The eclectic approach offered here underlines the richness of comparison. Regions can and should be compared in time as well as within and across different spaces and forms of organization. It is possible to compare the comprehensive and multidimensional regions at various scales (Europe, Africa/Southern Africa, East and Southeast Asia) but also to compare more distinct types of regions and regionalism, such as trade blocs, security regions, cognitive regions, river basins, and so forth. Using the EU as an example, as an object of research it can, for instance, be studied in different ways and its comparability depends on the questions asked and its conceptualization. As all other aspects of the social realm, the EU has at the same time both specific features and general characteristics that it shares with other regions and regional political communities. The great divide between EU studies and other regions has been bridged, even if the EU (just like other regions) also has certain unique properties (De Lombaerde et al. 2010; Van Langenhove 2011). For the same reasons, the eclectic perspective offered here does neither reject comparisons between the EU and other federations or even nation-states, nor necessarily between EU and older empires (even if that comparison may be somewhat more complicated). In other words, conceptual pluralism does not equal anarchy. The fundamental point is to be clear about the research question and case selection, while at the same maintaining conceptual clarity.

Table 1: Old, New, and Comparative Regionalism

	Old regionalism	New regionalism	Comparative regionalism
World order context	Bipolar world Cold War	Post-Cold War context Globalization & neoliberalism	Multipolar & 'Multiplex' world order War on terror Financial crises Rise of BRIC/Emerging Powers
Links between national, regional, and global modes of governance	Taming nationalism (in Europe) or Advancing nationalism (in South)	Resisting, taming or advancing economic globalization	Regional Worlds Post-hegemonic, post-neo-liberal, heterodox regionalism Regions part of multi-level global governance
Sectors, actors & forms of organization	Sector specific State-centric Formal regionalism Hard regionalism	Multi-sectoral State vs. non-state actors Regionalism vs. regionalization Formal vs. informal Hard vs. soft	Both multi-sectoral & sector-specific State & non-state Multiple forms of organization & designs
Ontology	Regional integration Regional organizations (& subsystems) Clear regional boundary lines	Ontological pluralism, confusion and disagreement Regionalism Regionalization Regional organizations	Porous & overlapping regions Conceptual pluralism – but not confusion Ontological pluralism Regions, regionalism, regional networks, regional governance
Epistemology	Dominance of positivism & rationalism & materialism (and some structuralism in the South)	Rationalism vs. constructivism vs. critical theory Materialism vs. ideas/identities Epistemological conflict	Epistemological pluralism Emerging dialogues
Methodology	Europe-focused Rigid comparison	Regional specialization (parochialism) vs. false universalism (Eurocentrism) Comparison as parallel case studies or quantitative studies Little dialogue between EU studies and IR/IPE regionalism	Increasing comparison Emergence of non-Eurocentric comparative regionalism (better contextual sensitivity and less conceptual rigidity)

Source: Author.

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