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Summary

Regionalism is a polysemic term that represents both a subfield of International Relations (IR) that studies regions of the world as well as a process of formation of regions themselves. Its meaning and content have evolved substantially from its inception in the 1940s to its most recent contributions in the early 21st century. More precisely, the field of regionalism was severely marked by neofunctionalism theory and an economic reading of international relations in the years of the cold war, to then embrace and welcome new contributions from post-positivist and critical theories and methodologies from the 1990s onward, featuring different manifestations, different causes, but also different normative meanings. Regionalism has, over the years, progressively moved away from Europe (both as a site of production of research and as an empirical case-study) to explore non-European and, more widely, non-Western and postcolonial domains, challenging Eurocentric theoretical and epistemological assumptions in IR. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the welcome rise of two sub-fields within regionalism that have become prominent in the last twenty years - comparative regionalism and interregionalism. Lastly, the last decade demonstrates that the field of regionalism is more than ever dynamic, developing, self-innovating and more and more conceptually aware, while at the same time being not immune from weaknesses, blind-spots and potential for further improvement and deeper dialogue with IR theory.

Introduction

This review looks at the literature on the field of regionalism aiming at uncovering its origins, developments, and future trajectories. The reader should be aware from the very beginning that 'regionalism' is a polysemic and multi-faceted term in International Relations (IR), which may indicate different things at different times. This review will pay attention to how regionalism has developed as a field of study, as well as how within it the notion of region has been used, discussed and evolved over the decades.

This is crucial to distinguish the plurality of notions of 'regionalism' and 'region'. 'Regionalism' indicates the *subfield* of IR that investigates the formation and evolution of regions in world politics. Scholars use the notion generically to refer to the literature, for instance like 'new regionalism' (see section The evolution of theories on regionalism). 'Regionalism' is the *process* of formation of regions, which is the subject of study. At the same time, the 'region' is an *ontology* (something that *is*) as well as a *process* (something that *develops*) and a *level of analysis* – an analytical space between the global and the national, where processes and dynamics of constitution and development of a region between different actors occur (something *where*). This plurality of notions of 'regionalism' and 'region' is obviously engaged with and approached by scholars from different theoretical and methodological points. Therefore, a critical literature review on this topic could be organised in a multitude of different ways – theoretically, thematically, geographically, methodologically, and so forth.

In order not to bring confusion with approaches to 'regionalism' and 'region' as *process, subfield of IR or subject of* study, we have chosen to structure this review chronologically, as we believe that this approach is well-equipped to illustrate to students and readers in general and comprehensively the changes, shifts, novelties, and rise/fall of debates in a progressive, temporal dimension, without nonetheless neglecting important developments at the theoretical, methodological, and thematic level within the field.

The origins of regionalism – WWII and the economy

Given that regions were given importance and paid heed already when the UN Charter was adopted in 1945, specifically in Chapter VIII,[1] it is natural that the academic literature moved its first steps in analysing regions and regionalism precisely around that time and right after WWII. In its aftermath, the world was in a state of economic disarray, and as it was exactly at that time that the first proposals for a newly restructured economic order were discussed, e.g. the Bretton Woods system, it is somehow natural that the first works on regions addressed the *economic* dimension of regionalism (see also Mitrany, 1943; Potter, 1943). The work of Lincoln Gordon (1961), for example, discusses exactly the restructuring of world economy along regional lines in order to make the principles and rules included in the Bretton Woods system (1945) more efficient, context-sensible, and ideologically widespread. Bernard Gordon, conversely, discusses whether and how regional economic cooperation can be achieved in South East Asia in order to better incorporate the region in the Western liberal economic order that was developing during the cold war (B. K. Gordon, 1964).

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[1] See, in particular, Articles 52-54. Specifically, Article 52.1 states that "Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations."

Theorisation and analytical refinement of regionalism

While much attention was certainly paid to the economic side of regionalism, however, it is not until 1965 that an initial theorisation of regionalism is offered. To be sure, in these early days, regionalism still lacks a proper theorisation and definition. Nowhere in the early texts on regional organisations we are to find a definition (or explanation, for that matter) of what constitutes a region, and how a region differs, for example, from a collective security organisation. Until the work of Wilcox (1965), followed by Haas (1966) and Haas and Schmitter (1973) the discipline of IR lacked a proper, structured discussion and understanding (or at least an attempt at it) of how regionalism impacts on processes of global governance. For the first time, regions are treated as entities and levels of analysis, and not just as self-evident outputs of inter-state economic cooperation. It is Wilcox who first introduces some crucial research questions, which will prove to be pivotal in subsequent decades, such as – how regional organisations are formed and are impacting on global structures of cooperation? How is membership in regional organisations affecting their economic and military delivery and efficiency? The point to make here is not that theorisation was lacking because of plain disinterest or intellectual inability. Rather, it is that it would be a mistake to analyse these early trends in regionalism scholarship by extrapolating them from their socio-cultural context

As the attentive reader may notice, those were the years of the Cold War. Hence, these early analyses of regional organisations and regional integration all featured strong references to the competition between the two superpowers, and tend to subsume any analysis of the formation and relevance of regional groups to the structural rivalry between the US and the USSR, without necessarily paying attention to theoretical sophistication and analytical rigour. In this respect, the first breakthrough in the literature on regionalism is offered by Joseph Nye, Jr., with his Peace in Parts, at the beginning of the new decade (Nye, 1971). The book, as the

title suggests, is very much embedded in discourses of peace and war in the cold war era, and is mainly interested in 'regional organizations' than in 'regions' per se. Nye asks 'What is a regional organization?' and refers to it as an organisation based on (1) Formal agreement among governments, (2) Possessing diplomatic forums, and (3) Assisted by an associated international bureaucracy. In this sense, he notes, the term regional 'organization' is narrower than the concept of a regional 'system,' which can be defined as a 'regular pattern of interaction among independent political units in a region' (Nye, 1971, p. 5). What is interesting, though, is that Nye is the first one who begins incorporating in the theorisation of regions and regionalism elements that the reader will find in the constructivist literature that begins in the 1980s and flourishes in the 1990s-early 2000s. This is evident, for example, when he argues that regions are 'relative', that 'there are no naturally determined regions' (Nye, 1971, p. 6), and that regions need a 'strong belief' and an 'iconography' to exist (Nye, 1971, p. 7), as well as 'discourses of legitimacy' (Nye, 1971, p. 7). He, however, defines the 'independent variable' on the basis of 'geographical contiguity' (Nye, 1971, p. 8), on the basis of the works of Wilcox (1965), Haas (1966), and Deutsch (1961).

Contributing to the analytical development of the field of regionalism, Nye also nods at the confusion present in the literature with respect to the two terms 'regionalism' and 'integration', too often assumed as synonyms. This, he notes, happened because of the (objectively quite unique, to the point that the *Journal of Common Market Studies* was founded in 1962 exactly to promote and disseminate research on the European experience of integration) experience of the European community in those days. As he argues, even when we restrict ourselves to the literature on regionalism, we find that the word has been given a broad range of meanings. For example, at the time of the creation of the European Common Market in 1957, 'integration' was used with at least four different meanings: political unification,

economic unification, economic and political cooperation, and more free trade. This means that policy-makers frequently used 'words like integration, cooperation, and community interchangeably in their speeches' (Nye, 1971, p. 24) (drawing on Lindberg, 1963).

Nye also, perhaps implicitly, introduces an additional layer of complexity to the debate and the study of regionalism and regional integration – that of the *normativity* thereof: not only is 'integration' used in a variety of ways, it also tends to have a positive evaluative aura about it which sometimes carries over into its usage in analysis and obstructs clear theory. Too often, he argues, there is an implicit assumption that integration is a 'good thing' per se, or that more integration is always good for peace, prosperity, or whatever (Nye, 1971 ,p. 25) (on this, see also Simmonds, 1970). This was also visible outside academia, in the wider socio-intellectual context of that time – for example, already in 1968, The Economist noted that the word regionalism 'pops up regularly and has established itself in the [American] administration's vocabulary to connote a vague kind of principle by which distant continents may get themselves into better order.' (The Economist, January 27, 1968, p. 31., quoted in Nye, 1971, p. 189)

The first two decades of regionalism studies, therefore, can be summarised as follows: First, in terms of theory, functionalism and neofunctionalism dominate the scene, especially thanks to the contribution of theorists such as Haas, Schmitter, and Nye. Second, regionalism is generally seen as something good, desirable, both for regional states themselves and world order without too much problematization of this argument – within the logic of the cold war, the idea of solid and sound regional economic blocs underpinning the enhancement and entrenchment of global financial institutions became an object of study as well as a policy in Western administrations – this is very evident in the fact, especially at the onset of the

discipline, most works on regionalism were published in highly influential and widely-read outlets such as *World Politics* and *International Organisations*. In other words, regionalism is policy-oriented rather than theory-driven, apart from very few exceptions. Third, while there are certainly works on non-Western regions, such as southeast Asia and the Middle East, it seems clear that there is nothing as a comparative research agenda or as a research focus on the global south and non-aligned states, apart from very few exceptions until the end of the 1960s (Haas & Schmitter, 1966).

The regionalism of the Global South

With the advent of the 1970s, not only regionalism became subject to more theorisation and analytical clarity, but also it expanded in its geographical scope. As could be perhaps expected, the new focus was on Latin America, because of its importance within the greater framework of cold war politics. Avery and Cochrane (1973) adopt functionalism and liberalism in their analysis of the Andean Community thus somehow perpetuating the theoretical tradition of the previous decades – for example, they clearly make reference to 'process conditions', which is a clear predeterminant of functional theory. Even if not theoretically explicit, they clearly refer to Haas and Schmitter (1973, p. 190). Yet, despite the several theoretical linkages with the past, two are the innovations of this piece – the first one is that it is one of the very first times that scholarship, so to say, goes out to Europe to study another regional domain empirically (albeit with European theories) calling for a specific comparative agenda. The second innovation that the analysis begins to go below the state level, to now include elements of national bureaucracies and sub-state actors, such as functionaries and unions of industrialists.

In the subsequent years, attention to more theorisation, Latin America/Global South and Eurocentrism are the two main trends in the discipline of regionalism. The first trend is actually a continuation of the late 1960s, especially the work of Nye (1965), Segal (1967), Haas (1967), and Hansen (1969). For example, in the mid-1970s, Alexander (1974) and Bond (1978) both incorporate Latin American politics in the academic context of regionalism. Yet, while the former is interested in how Latin American states use international law to forge intergovernmental cooperation, the latter's work is in fact a useful summary of the previous literature on the impediments and stumbling blocks to regional integration using Latin America as an example. In particular, Bond's work is important as it advances the first systematisation of the difficulties of 'achieving' regionalism - weak institutional structures, an unequal distribution of the benefits of integration, nationalism, competing ideologies, and external pressures (which, given the wider political context, seems rather appropriate). Building on the contemporary work of Joseph Nye (1971), Bond also introduces in the literature one of the very first discussions of great powers' interests and strategies towards regional organizations: (1) hemispheric influence, (2) containment, (3) economic development, and (4) conflict prevention and management.

Towards the end of the decade, Axline (1977) presented a further neat and clear argumentation of the importance of studying regionalism while escaping Eurocentrism. He pays attention to the discrepancy between the fact that most of regionalism is in the non-European world but most theories are either still developed in Europe or refer to the European experience, and argues that the discipline has so far too much focussed on 'fitting conditions' for European regionalism to be seen in the global South. Also, on the basis of previous research, he contributes to advocating a more comparative approach, yet aimed at 1) understanding regionalism from an economic perspective (in this decade regionalism is still seen as a way to

fight dependence from the capitalist core and as a matter of opportunity costs) and 2) to identify patterns of similarity across the Third World. This is a crucial development in the discipline for, as we shall see, it is in direct connection with the establishment of the non-European comparative agenda of the 2000s. As De Lombaerde et al. will argue three decades later, 'the challenge for comparative regionalism is to both include and transcend European integration theory and practice' (2010, p. 744).

Regionalisation and security of regions

Following the trends indicated in 'The regionalism of the Global South', the discipline of regionalism in the 1980s followed two new consistent patterns – on the one hand, works on non-European regions such as South Asia (Muni, 1985; Tiwari, 1985), the Pacific (Boyd, 1984) and Africa kept growing, while on the other hand domains other than economic integration were kept being explored. Leys and Tostensen (1982), for example, analyse regionalism in South Africa focusing on the role of regional hegemonic power and how its presence can hinder or promote regionalist dynamics, thus anticipating on the abovementioned lines of Bond (1978) the research program on regional security complexes (Buzan, 1983; Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Väyrynen, 1984).

Another interesting aspect of Leys' and Tostensen's paper, which builds on previous research and somehow anticipates theories of new regionalism and the constructivist turn, is that the argument is based on an assessment of the role that ideas and intellectuals play in forging regionalism, thus anticipating, albeit implicitly, discourses of *regionalisation* – for example, it is suggested to use Pan-Africanism as a lens of analysis to elucidate regional multilateralism in southern Africa. Along the same lines is the work of Ginther (1982), who somehow anticipates the work that theories like the English School will bring into regional

studies and that scholars such as Amitav Acharya will contribute to the discipline through the theorisation of norm localisation and norm subsidiarity – the local interpretation of norms and institutions of international society. As a matter of fact, he is interested in the impact of decolonisation and African understanding of international legal norms on international law, especially with respect to the idea of a norm on 'development' and, finally, that one way of encouraging the study of international law in Africa was the production of textbooks and the publication of materials and documents written and compiled from the African experience and point of view (Ginther, 1982, p. 60). This is also done by Okolo (1985), who complements and inserts theorisation of African regionalism within the wider context of theorisation of regionalism, yet again relying on the functional conditions for regionalism identified by Haas and Schmitter (1966), Ravenhill (1979), Hansen (1969), and Barrera and Haas (1969).

In terms of security of regions, the 1980s see the production of some of the highest theoretical work by Raimo Väyrynen (1984), examining the formation of regional conflicts and regional diplomatic resolution thereof. While Väyrynen is still somehow tied to an economic logic of regionalism (he sees regionalism as inherently linked to developments of the capitalist world economy, relying on the works of Immanuel Wallerstein, thus relying on theoretical insights produced in the 1960s and 1970s) he clearly sets out a research agenda on regionalism by stating that the significance of regional subsystems is growing both in international conflicts and in international relations in general (1984, p. 339), something that will be taken on board in the early 2000s by the literature on regional security complexes (although see also Buzan, 1983; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In his essay, Väyrynen augments the analytical depth of regionalism by refining the characteristics of regions (see also Thompson, 1973), the interplay between dependence vs. autonomy, homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, economic formations, and politico-military influence, the degree of global-regional dynamics

(which will have a great deal of importance in the literature of global governance) and, most importantly, a focus on conflict rather than on integration per se. This represent an analytical but also, in a way, a discursive shift as well. As a matter of fact, as noticed above the literature reviewed so far has always seen regionalism as something good, necessary, right, while Väyrynen shows that regions can also be together by conflict, and not necessarily by economic integration only. This will be expanded on in the next decade as well, specifically by critical theorists (see for example Boas, Marchand, & Shaw, 1999).

The evolution of theories of regionalism in the 1990s

The next decade, the 1990s, sees the rise of new trends in the discipline. New perspectives on new regions (Southeast Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States, see e.g. Rumley, 1999), new topics (gender, for example, enters the scene - see Marchand, 1994), but also new theorisation on the contemporary rise in regionalism are worth noting. For example, Hettne and Soderbaum (2000; following Ohmae, 1993) identify four factors to explain the renewed rise of regionalism (both in world politics and in IR) in the 1990s: the change of the nature of the international system (1) moving from bipolarity to multipolarity; (2) the initial decline of American hegemony; (3) the erosion of the Westphalian nation state system under pressure by globalisation dynamics; and (4) the emerging, contesting approaches to neoliberalism. At the same time, the 1990s is the first decade in which a marked interest in constructivism and non-state regionalism, i.e. regionalisation, is coming to the fore. With respect to the former, the work of Amitav Acharya (1997) and Peter Katzenstein (1996) set the ground to improve the previous work on non-European regions and the role of non-material factors, theorising how identities and ideas *constitute* and *permeate*, rather than simply supporting, regional projects and regional groupings of states. In particular, Acharya sees regionalism as an exercise in identity-building and socialisation, quite in contrast with the

previous literature much more focused on economic gains and benefits of economic integration – thus introducing in the literature on regionalism new elements such as cooperative security, open regionalism, soft regionalism, and flexible consensus.

In his work in the 1990s, Acharya also keeps on exploring alternatives to Eurocentrism, thus laying the foundation for the subsequent research agenda on comparative regionalism. Katzenstein also focuses on identities, norms, and logics of socialisation in the formation of regions exploring non-European domains. Acharya and Katzenstein are part of a much wider trend, aimed at incorporating history, area studies, IR theory and works on globalisation and world order, all produced in the 1990s, into a single coherent analytical framework (Adler & Barnett, 1988; Boas et al., 1999; Fawcett & Hurrell, 1995; Held, 1995; Hettne, 1998). It is thus evident that the field of regionalism in the 1990s is becoming more complex, more enmeshed with social sciences, more detached from positivism and more linked to broader questions of social forces, order, and identity. To these novelties, which by all means where present but not developed in a clearly identifiable and coherent research program during the 60s, 70s and the 80s due to strict cold war logics (of politics, of diplomacy, and thus inevitably of thought and of research), one should also notice that in the 1990s the concept of 'regionalisation' comes to the fore, referred to as processes of cooperation, convergence, synthesis of interests and goals on a regional basis not necessarily on a state-basis but rather on a people-to-people one on the basis of economic cooperation, cultural proximity, political feelings, and the like (Hettne, 1998).

Breslin and Higgott (2000) summarise the above by reviewing the state of the field of regionalism up to the turn of the millennium, arguing that the 1990s constituted a 'return' to regionalism. While we do not necessarily agree with this, as the above showed that the 1980s were indeed a decade indeed featuring works on non-European regions, we concur that it is fair to say that there was a lack of theorisation of the *idea* of regions, of their constitutive *we-*

feeling, of the non-material, fundamental components of regionalism and regionalisation, which is ironic given the foundational work of Deutsch (1961). Also, they note that 'the Other' was not theorised in the previous decades. In other words, they argue that studies of regions were too much idiographic and in-ward looking, without paying attention to how regions would define themselves in opposition to other regional groupings. Furthermore, one may concur with them by saying that history *in* and *of* regionalism was a little bit neglected.

The literature of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s certainly relied more on empirics and less on theory – apart from the few exceptions noted, scholarship on regionalism was way too statist, and neglected the importance of non-state actors. Given all this, what may we say about the state of the field of regionalism at the turn of the millennium? To begin with, it is safe to say that there has been a progressive acceleration on issues such as identity, ideas, and culture. Also, more and more regions in the world started being uncovered and analysed. Eurocentrism is definitely the methodological and epistemological 'foe' to cope with, and a propellent for comparative research agendas based on similarities and differences between regions outside Europe, as well as between non-European regions and Europe. Furthermore, the literature has showed a progressive attention to *processes*, and in the 1990s has started featuring the introduction of the distinction between state-led *regionalism* and people-driven r*egionalisation*, as well as the role of informality (Marchand, Boas and Shaw 1999; Hettne and Soderbaum 2000:471). The new intellectual movement in the 1990s, called 'new regionalism' (Hettne and Soderbaum 2000) was in sum dissatisfied with the too much focus on the formal institutions and brought in non-state actors and informal relations (Acharya, 2012, p. 8).

The 1990s also observed numerous calls to develop comparative regionalism systematically, to promote a more stable marriage between IR theory, political science, and area studies, and to make the necessary consideration that economic efficiency, so dear to (neo)functionalists and (neo)liberalists, sometimes contrasts with other socio-political goals

rooted in power politics, history, identity, and culture. Despite this, Breslin and Higgott acknowledge that the field of regionalism is still somehow (the reader will judge whether inevitably or not) linked to economics and in particular to international political economy. It is perhaps not by chance that their review of the state of the literature on regionalism at the turn of the millennium was published, a bit ironically, in the form of a special issue in *New Political Economy.* To support this claim, they stress the importance of financial crises in the 1990s, especially in Asia, in the light of which they argue that the regional project is both a part of and a facilitator of globalisation, and a regional counter-governance, they also argue that regionalism is a layer in the world political economy to the point that they affirm that (Breslin & Higgott, 2000, p. 340): the relationship between regions and neoliberal paradigms and economic policies is at the heart of many of the new assessments of regionalism and regionalisation.

Sharpening the approach to regionalism, development of regionness and interregionalism

The turn of the century and, indeed, millennium offered a more comprehensive and detailed view on regionalism. More specifically, the literature in the 2000s present three strands of inquiry into regionalism as a field of International Relations. First, for the first time it pays attention to defining what regionalism is from the perspective of different IR theories (Rosamond, 2000; Söderbaum, 2003) and, by doing so, also distinguishing it with the concept of regionalisation. This may be called *theoretical and conceptual awareness*, and it is in stark contrast with the loose definition(s) of regionalism provided in the previous decades (Cantori & Spiegel, 1970; Russett, 1967; Thompson, 1973). Second, focuses on providing the typology of regionalism processes and its application in different areas. This may be called *analytical awareness*. The third strand of literature presents scholarship that evaluates regionalism projects, especially in comparison to the EU integration. Thus, studies by Louise Fawcett

(2004), Hettne (2005) and De Lombaerde et al. (2010) trace the development of the scholarship on regionalism, therefore, providing insights on the trends and directions for future research – an example of this is the recent development of interregionalism. This may be called *disciplinary awareness* (on this, see the magisterial work of Söderbaum, 2015).

Defining regionalism in the 2000s proves to be an elusive activity despite calls for conceptual clarity and cohesion, as scholars have divergent views on this. For Katzenstein (2006, p. 1; in Mansfield & Solingen, 2010, p. 147) regionalism is institutionalised practices. Fawcett (2004, p. 433) refers to it as a policy or project. For Acharya, we saw it was (and is) an exercise in identity-building. At the same time, the definitions of regionalization are also flagged up and the distinction between two terms defined. Regionalization is a project and a process (Fawcett, 2004, p. 433) that involves actors (Katzenstein, 2006, 1) and as a feature of regionalism of 'societal integration,' in other words a 'soft regionalism' (Hurrell, 1995, pp. 39–40). This has been especially driven by constructivists and post-structuralist scholars by bringing more emphasis of ideas, identities, and discourses in regionalism. Definitions of regionalism aside, the early 2000s also see the development of a third conceptual category within the field alongside regionalism and regionalisation – that of *regionness*, defined as 'the process whereby a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region' (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000, p. 461). By combining global social theory, constructivism, and comparative studies, Hettne and Söderbaum open the new millennium of regional studies with the establishment of a framework to study the formation and *processes of evolution of regionness* in specific areas of the world, ranging from poorly developed regional spaces to highly integrated regional (quasi-)states passing through regional complexes, societies, and communities. This is an important theoretical development, as for the first time it is made explicit in the literature that

regions are not fixed, immutable, and all-alike, but rather develop, rise and 'decay' diachronically on the basis of different levels of regionness.

As noted, a review of the regionalism literature in the 2000s has also allowed systematizing the scholarship and dividing it into categories. Thus, Hettne (2005) provides a typology of regionalism and clustering it around specific issue. For instance, *monetary regionalism* represents the regional processes in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. *Development regionalism* demonstrates a spillover effect from regional trade and economic links, and in some ways follows the EU integration model and compares it to other regional structures, such as MERCOSUR, SADC, and others. Regional security complexes and alliances best illustrate *security regionalism*. This way of thinking about clusters of regionalism has also been recently utilised by scholars working in the field of climate change and refers to *environmental regionalism* to highlight the role of regional organsations in cooperating on the issues of environment (Elliott, 2017).

Another important introduction in the field of regionalism that occurred at the turn of the century was the development of the sub-field of interregionalism, simply defined as the political, economic, security and diplomatic interactions between two or more regions/regional organisations. This novelty, it is important to note, mirrors exactly what was regionalism in the previous decades. In other words, interregionalism becomes not only as a contemporary *political strategy* to cooperate between different regional organizations (Doidge, 2007; Meissner, 2017). It is also a direction that the *field of study* of regionalism takes, emphasising its different functions. First, interregionalism may be used by political elites as a balancing strategy in the power structures of the international system. This is, especially, unpacked by the authors in their work on 'balancing regionalism' (Tskhay and Costa Buranelli, 2018) and by Pankel and Stapel in their research on 'overlapping regionalism (2018). Second, interregionalism allows for proliferation of norms, rules and values and facilitates intra-

regional institution building (Hänggi, 1999 in Doidge, 2007, p. 233; Linsenmaier, 2015; Ruland, 2010). Third, from the perspective of global governance, interregionalism gives opportunities to solve issues at the regional level between various regional structures without the involvement of macro-level of governance.

With the four decades of scholarship and a better understanding of regional processes, scholars have started to introduce their evaluation of regional projects, thus somehow perpetuating the normativity of regionalism observed in the previous decades. Thus, also in the 2000s discussions of 'failed' cases of regionalism provide a normative attitude towards regional integration and cooperation projects and raise expectations from them (Barnett & Solingen, 2007; De Lombaerde, 2014; De Lombaerde et al., 2010; Kubicek, 2009; Pinfari, 2009), despite more emphasis on non-Western regional institutional peculiarities, informal organizational designs, and indigenous models of integration (Acharya & Johnston, 2014). In fact, as the following decade of literature shows other regions of the world are paving their own way for integration and present alternative versions of regionalism.

This push to diversify regionalism and to investigate non-European domains does neither mean at all that Europe is a neglected region, nor that processes of integration there are an overlooked issue. It is in the early 2000s, for example, that European integration theory comes to the fore (Wiener & Diez, 2003), and that Europe's experience is analysed in the wider normative and institutional structure of world politics (Diez & Whitman, 2002; see also Stivachtis, 2008). Yet, at the same time, it is undeniable that in this and the following decade the field of regionalism finally ventures solidly into non-European domains, establishing real sub-fields within itself: African regionalism (Fagbayibo, 2018; Fioramonti & Mattheis, 2015; Nathan, 2010) Middle Eastern regionalism (Beck, 2015; Dakhalallah, 2012; Ibrahim, 2018), South American regionalism (Malamud & Gardini, 2012; Quiliconi & Espinoza, 2017; Riggirozzi, 2012), (South-)East Asian regionalism (Acharya, 2017; Beeson, 2018; Beeson &

Lee-Brown, 2017; Goh, 2011; Katada, 2011), Eurasian regionalism (Allison, 2008; Aris, 2011; Libman & Vinokurov, 2018) and even Arctic regionalism (Ingimundarson, 2014; Young, 2005; Zimmerbauer, 2013).

As anticipated above, one important thing to note in this decade is the consideration given to the methodological framework(s) to be used for the study of regionalism (Hameiri, 2013). The two main approaches to be identified are *qualitative single case studies* that go in-depth with understanding historical, cultural and societal contexts of the regionalism. Second is the *quantitative multiple case studies* that try to make generalisations of the patterns of regionalization across regions and is used especially by IPE scholars (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 744). Yet, the direction towards comparative regionalism studies also requires a more rigorous approach to methodology (Beeson & Islam, 2005; Söderbaum, 2009). A solution for that could be mixed methods as suggested by De Lombaerde et al (2010), however this is still an issue to explore in the future.

The last decade of regionalism – old concerns, new approaches

When we turn to the scholarship from 2010s and to present day on regionalism there are several avenues for research that are highlighted. First, there is even bigger push for non-Western studies on regionalism and in doing so critique of Western approaches to regionalism study (International Spectator 2012). Thus, for example, Acharya (2012) enhances the study of comparative regionalism introducing a historical narrative of the non-Western regional initiatives that underpin regional organisations. He emphasises the role of regional identities, such as pan-Arabism, pan-Africanism that foster further regional cooperation and integration, thus arguing that after all the initial studies conducted in the previous decades, historically-aware and methodologically-solid comparative regionalism is 'a field whose time has come'.

This is also supported by the growing literature on comparative regionalism, a good example of which is the recently published *The Handbook of Comparative Regionalism* edited by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse (2016). By 2010s, it is fair to say, quoting De Lombaerde et al. (2010, p. 735), that 'since the late 1990s, and after a slow start dominated by single or parallel case studies, comparative analysis has now become one of the most important trends in the contemporary study of regionalism.'

With the proliferation of literature on regionalism from different parts of the world, scholars have presented alternative visions of regionalism challenging the liberal Western theories and, sometimes, dogmas (Fawn, 2009; Paul, 2012). This has also led to the reconsideration of some Western-centric assumptions of well-established theories, such as the English School (ES) and its core concept of international society. The origin of the regional agenda of the ES can be dated back to the work of Buzan (2004), who argued that at the regional level, given geographical and cultural proximity between states and societies, we should expect more organic and more solidarist sub-global, regional orders. This has sparked a new research agenda on regional international societies (Buzan & Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009; Buzan & Zhang, 2015; Costa Buranelli, 2014, 2018; Merke, 2011; Schouenborg, 2012), which has led to the creation of a standing working group on regional international societies at the International Studies Association and to the exploration of new methodologies and epistemologies (Spandler, 2018).

There is a growing strand of literature that utilizes the ideas of regionalism and applying it to the cases of regional organisations established by authoritarian regimes (Libman & Obydenkova, 2018). Such authoritarian regionalism signifies the diversification of the regionalism practices around the world. What this means is that authoritarian states are also promoting their norms and values and establishing regional organisations that provide legitimacy to their regimes and policies.

The promotion of illiberal visions of regionalism by states also comes at a time of the rise of revisionist policies and the clash between the West and Russia, for instance, as well as the challenges that the US, sovereign democracies and growing nationalism are posing to regional projects and multilateralism more in general. At the same time, IR scholars are paying attention to changes in the world order. Such changes in the world order also poses opportunities for the diversification of regional orders and the rise of alternative visions of order. Grevi (2018) discusses the importance in the management of the power politics at the regional level, thus, by referring to the concept of balance of power. Regional organizations and regional cooperation are discussed also with the relationship with the hegemonic powers. Therefore, the question remains how world order will react to the spread and plurality of the regional orders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that regionalism studies have significantly developed over the decades, both in theoretical and in empirical terms. The field has grown more and more multifaceted, complex, and receptive of changes in the wider discipline of IR theory, and has significantly contributed to other domains such as international organisations studies and global governance studies. (Neo)functionalism has progressively made room for other IR theories such as constructivism, post-structuralism, and the ES. It has expanded in terms of methodological avenues (quantitative and qualitative studies are now both practiced) as well as geographical spectrum and actors to study. It has moved on to embrace non-state actors, informality, and transregional and trans-sectorial dynamics with what has been dubbed 'new regionalism', and has significantly and successfully challenged several methodological and ontological assumptions based on the European experience and the alleged teleology thereof. At the same time, we believe that the field of regionalism faces open important questions to be addressed and avenues for further research to be paved. For example, the shifting world order, specifically

from unipolarity to multipolarity, will certainly impact on regionalism (Kacowicz, 2018) – yet, scholars still have contradicting views on this. Enhanced globalization and at the same time rise of populism and ultra-nationalism can affect the development of regional projects and of globalisation more in general (Brexit is a vivid example of this, as well as the gilets jaunes movement in France and the rise of populist parties across all Europe). This may well require a new research agenda not on the formation processes of regionalism, but rather on *de-regionalism* and *de-regionalisation*. Furthermore, we agree with Mansfield and Solingen (2010) that the *sources*, rather than only the outcomes, of regionalism should be studied more in-depth, especially in relationship to state and non-state actors and formal and informal structures. Finally, we identify *comparative normative regionalism* as a promising field of studies. In other words, we suggest that scholarship on regionalism should draw on recent constructivist insights to trace the changes in meanings and practices of different norms in different regions, as well as the mechanisms behind these changes. Recent work on the polysemy of institutions of international society (Costa Buranelli, 2015) as well as on different regional international organisations' norms (Costa Buranelli, 2018) is a valid initial attempt to do this, yet we acknowledge that more is to be done.

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