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Theorising Comparative Regionalism: Bridging Old Divides

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Introduction

Over the last decade regionalism has become somewhat of an academic growth industry in a number of social science specialisations: European studies, comparative politics, international economics, international geography, international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE). The approach of these different academic specialisations varies considerably, which means that regionalism means different things to different people. The field of regionalism is fragmented and plagued by divisions, which, in our view need to be transcended in order to reach new research frontiers. In response this paper seeks to contribute to a more productive debate between different theoretical standpoints in the research field.

The study of regionalism contains a significant number of different theoretical approaches to regionalism, from a revival of neofunctionalism to a variety of constructivist, critical and ‘new regionalism’ approaches, and with neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism in between. There are quite a few interesting theoretical explanations of specified aspects of regionalism. The problem with rigid theorising is that it must delimit the object for study, even while the object refuses too much reductionism. An empirical case can (or rather should) be approached from different theoretical angles.

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Different theories illuminate different dimensions of a multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore we will not propose any preferred theory in this paper. Our purpose is instead to point at the divides that tend to fragment the research field and which need to be overcome and left behind.

Our study centres around what is here considered to be the three main divides in the research field. The first is between what has been termed ‘old’ and ‘new’ regionalism. After two decades of so-called ‘new regionalism’ we propose its dissolution. The second unfortunate divide is between European integration scholars and IR/IPE scholars, which continuously are speaking past one another. In our view, the study of regionalism would be greatly enhanced if scholars from these two camps would learn to communicate and build on each others’ research results (cf. Warleigh and Rosamond, 2005). The third divide is that globalisation and regionalism are often treated in a grossly simplified way, especially in the sense that regionalism is often seen as either an integral part of economic globalisation (a stepping stone) or as a political instrument to resist economic globalisation (a stumbling block). It is not until we transcend such simplified conceptualisations that we will be able to better understand the complex and multifold relationships between globalisation and regionalism. As will become evident below, even if our analysis is structured according to the three divides, there are important overlaps between the themes.

Transcending Old and New Regionalism

It has become commonplace in the field to distinguish between an older or earlier wave of regionalism (then often referred to as ‘regional integration’) in the 1950s and 1960s and a more recent new ‘wave’ or ‘generation’ of regionalism starting in the latter half of the 1980s and today being a prevalent phenomenon throughout the world. There are, however, both continuities and similarities between so called ‘old’ and ‘new’ regionalism, so that when studying contemporary regionalism one can easily get a feeling of *déjà vu*. For instance, many regional projects and regional organisations were actually initiated from the 1960s, 1970s or early 1980s, and then simply renewed or re-inaugurated (sometimes with a new name and sometimes with a few different members) in the mid-1980s and 1990s.

Under such circumstances it is often difficult to separate the historical from the contemporary. In response to these continuities we have argued elsewhere for identifying ‘new’ patterns of regionalisation co-existing with ‘older’ forms (Hettne, 1999: 8; Söderbaum 2004). But after two decades of so-called ‘new regionalism’, the distinction has lost much of its original meaning (or been overly misused), and we are herewith proposing that it is time to bury it.

Having said this, it is still relevant to identify continuities and discontinuities, both in terms of empirical practices and theoretical perspectives, and for this purpose we find it more useful to distinguish between the early and the more recent debate. In what follows we describe the first ‘generation’ of regionalism studies, focused on regional integration in Europe, and the subsequent ‘big leap’ from the ‘early debate’ to the more ‘recent debate’, which really was the study of regionalisms in the context of globalisation.

Here it needs saying that even if the distinction between old and new regionalism has been misused and also lost much of its meaning, it is still consistent to argue for the continued relevance of so-called ‘new regionalism’ *theory*, including the new regionalism approach (NRA) which we have both been trying to develop elsewhere (Hettne 2003, 2005; Hettne et al, 1999-2001; Hettne and Söderbaum 2000; Söderbaum 2004a; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003). The new regionalism approach/theory is a particular way (or rather ways) of analysing the phenomenon of regionalism and is not dependent on a tight distinction between old and new regionalism.

The early debate¹

The early theories or approaches to regionalism were all concerned with peace, and tended to see the nation-state as the problem rather than the solution. The most relevant theories were federalism, functionalism and neofunctionalism. Federalism, which inspired the pioneers of European integration, was not really a theory but rather a political programme; it was sceptical of the nation-state, although what was to be created was in fact

¹ This section draws mainly on Hettne (2005), which in turn is inspired by Rosamond (2002).

a new kind of state. There was no obvious theorist associated with federalism. In contrast, functionalism has been much identified with one particular name, that of David Mitrany (1965, 1966). This was also an approach to peace-building rather than a theory. The question for functionalists was on which political level various human needs (often defined in a rather technical way) could best be met. Usually, the best way was found to be going beyond the nation-state, but not necessarily going regional. Thus both federalism and functionalism wanted the nation-state to go, but through different routes and by different means. For the functionalists, international organisations should be established in the promotion of cooperation and transnational activities around basic functional needs, such as transportation, trade, production and welfare. Economics was seen as more important than politics. Functionalism was rather technocratic and therefore unrealistic. Form, in the functionalist view, was supposed to follow function, whereas for federalists it was really form that mattered. Mitrany criticised both federalism and regional integration in general because both were primarily based on territory rather than function. For functional solutions there should be no territorial boundaries. Territoriality was seen as part of the Westphalian logic and Westphalia implied conflict and war. However, in contrast to the European Community (EC), which was a political community, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was, according to Mitrany, a functional and therefore acceptable organisation (for here the technical question was: how can coal and steel production best be organised?).

One early approach that to a larger extent had theoretical ambitions was neofunctionalism: the theory (but also strategy) of European integration. The central figure here was Ernst Haas. He challenged the functionalist assumption of the separability of politics, claiming that the technical realm was in fact made technical by a prior political decision. Neofunctionalists argued that raising levels of interdependence would set in motion a process eventually leading to political integration. The emphasis was on process and purposeful actors, far away from functional automaticity. Haas in fact theorised the 'community method' of Jean Monnet. Even if the outcome of this method could be a federation, the way of building it was not by constitutional design. The basic mechanism was 'spill-over', this key concept being defined as 'the way in which the creation and

deepening of integration in one economic sector would create pressures for further economic integration within and beyond that sector, and greater authoritative capacity at the European level' (Rosamond, 2002: 60).

Europe was the centre of the debate about old regionalism. In the 1960s the fit between the neofunctional description (and prescription) and the empirical world, now dominated by de Gaulle's nationalism, disappeared. Stanley Hoffman (1966) asserted that integration could not spread from low politics (economics) to the sphere of high politics (security). Integration happened only as long as it coincided with the national interest. The image of the EC began to diverge. According to Alan Milward (1992), the EC should be seen as a 'rescue of the nation-state'. The EC could furthermore be understood as a confederation rather than a federation, according to the intergovernmentalist turn in the study of European integration. The ontological shift thus implied an epistemological shift towards a more state-centric, realist analysis.

Haas responded to his critics by calling the study of integration 'pre-theory' (since there was no clear idea about dependent and independent variables), then spoke about 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. Rather, it should be seen as an aspect of the study of interdependence (a concept then popularised by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye). This was again a new turn. The global context was not really considered by old regionalism theory, concerned as it was with regional integration as a planned merger of national economies through cooperation among a group of nation-states. Comparative studies were for obvious reasons rare. Haas listed a number of background factors for successful integration and Philippe Schmitter focused particularly on Latin America and Joseph Nye on Africa (Haas, 1961; Haas and Schmitter, 1964). In retrospect it is particularly interesting to see that the early theorists looked for post-Westphalian trends, but the global dynamics were then stifled by the bipolar structure. In the post-Westphalian context emerging after end of Cold War the earlier theorising is becoming more relevant (see Rosamond, 2005).

The recent debate

In the real world, the 1970s was a period of 'Eurosclerosis' within the European Communities. Elsewhere, those attempts to create regional organisations that had been made were failing and most of these organisations fell into dormancy. However, the 1985 white paper on the internal market started a new dynamic process of European integration. This was also the start of the 'new regionalism' elsewhere; after some time, everywhere. Naturally, this attracted a lot of interest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. What was striking, though, was the lack of correspondence in this respect between economics and political science.

The studies of the so-called 'new regionalism' considered new aspects, particularly those focused on conditions related to what increasingly came to be called globalisation (Hettne et al, 1999, Farrell et al 2005; Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Gamble and Payne 1996; Schulz et al 2001; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003). Regionalism is strongly related to globalisation, but there are, as we shall see below, different views on the nature of this relationship. Much of the more recent debate on regionalism is strongly related to the relationship between globalisation and regionalism.

It is obvious that an understanding of contemporary regionalism requires both an *endogenous perspective*, according to which regionalisation is shaped from within the region by a large number of different actors, and an *exogenous perspective*, according to which regionalisation and globalisation are intertwined articulations, contradictory as well as complementary, of global transformation (see Hettne 2002, 2003). The endogenous perspective stronger underlines the connection between old and new regionalism, for instance the relevant continuities back to functionalist and neofunctionalist theorising about the integration of Europe, the role of agency, as well as the long-term transformation of territorial identities.

Whereas the early debate was heavily focused on the concept of regional integration and to some extent regional cooperation, the more recent debate (with the exception of European integration studies) is more centred around the concepts of regionalism and regionalisation. At least from the view of its users, this is assumed to be more appropriate

for covering the multidimensional features of current regionalism and transcending the limitations and state-centrism inherent in the concept regional integration (for broader definitions of regional integration, see Warleigh and Rosamond, 2005, as well as the approach adopted by the United Nations University-Comparative Regional Integration Studies, UNU-CRIS; www.cris.unu.edu). Regionalism refers to a tendency and a political commitment to organise the world in terms of regions; more narrowly, the concept refers to a specific regional project. In some definitions the actors behind this political commitment are states; in other definitions the actors are not confined to states. According to Anthony Payne and Andrew Gamble, 'regionalism is a state-led or states-led project designed to reorganise a particular regional space along defined economic and political lines' (Payne and Gamble, 1996: 17). Due to the fact that their main concern lies with state-centred conceptions and projects of regional cooperation and integration they also share some important features with several earlier theories. But there are also discontinuities. Payne and Gamble say that 'regionalism is seen as something that is being constructed, and constantly reconstructed, by collective human action' (Ibid, 17), which sounds like a more comprehensive view as far as agency is concerned.

Other authors find it difficult to confine the regionalism project to states. The project on the 'new regionalism', financed by the United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), suggested that, in the context of globalisation, the state was being 'unbundled', with the result that actors other than the state were gaining strength (Hettne *et al*, 1999-2001). By implication, the focus of analysis should not only be on state actors and formal inter-state frameworks, but also on non-state actors and what is sometimes referred to broadly as non-state regionalisation.²

Business interests are often supposed to be globalist in their orientation. However, this seems to be a myth. Globalisation strategies and multinationals actually tend to end up creating more regionalised patterns of economic activity (cf. Rugman 2005). Civil societies

² A large number of labels have been used in the debate for capturing these two similar (but not always identical) phenomena, such as 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' regionalisation; *de jure* and *de facto* regionalisation; states-led regionalism and market and society-induced regionalisation; and formal/informal regionalism.

are still rather neglected in the description and explanation of new regionalism. Similarly, even if the external environment and globalisation are often readily called into account, extra-regional actors themselves are also generally weakly described and conceptualised within the study of regionalism. This is somewhat surprising, given the considerable attention which ‘external’ actors — such as foreign powers, donors, international financial institutions, non-governmental organisations, transnational corporations and so on — receive in the study of national and local transformation processes, especially in the South. In the final analysis, it is not really a question of state-led regionalism versus non-state-led regionalism. On the contrary, state, market, civil society and external actors often come together in a variety of mixed-actor coalitions, networks and modes of governance (Söderbaum, 2004a).

We are not casting out the baby with the bathwater and claiming the irrelevance of the state. On the contrary, states continue to be crucial actors in the process of regionalisation, but in at least partly different ways compared to in the past and in mainstream theorising. Therefore, we need to complement conventional conceptualisations and notions about the role of states in regionalism. In a recent book on the political economy of regionalism in Southern Africa, one of us has ‘unpacked’ the state and addressed the question for whom and for what purpose regionalism and regionalisation is being pursued (Söderbaum, 2004a). It is shown how ruling political leaders engage in a rather intense diplomatic game, whereby they praise regionalism and sign treaties, such as free trade agreements and water protocols. In so doing, they can be perceived as promoters of the goals and values of regionalism, which enables them to raise the profile and status of their authoritarian regimes. What is particularly important is that often the ‘state’ is not much more than a (neopatrimonial) interest group. Furthermore, although the rhetoric and ritual of regional diplomacy serves the goal of the reproduction and legitimisation of the state, it can also be a means to create a façade that enables certain regime actors to engage together with other non-state market actors in more informal modes of regionalism, such as trans-state regionalism or networks of plunder. This has also been referred to as ‘shadow regionalism’ (Söderbaum, 2004b).

Summing up, in contrast with the time in which Haas was writing there are today many regionalisms and thus a very different base for comparative studies (see Bøås et al 1999). ‘Old regional organisations continued but with at least partly new functions, while new regional organisations were formed to meet new challenges. At the same time various actors (especially non-state actors) have begun to operate in these regional arenas, dealing with regional and global problems and providing regional and global public goods. In view of all of this, it is rather obvious that neither the object for study (ontology) nor the way of studying it (epistemology) have remained the same.

Bridging European Integration and IR Regionalism

After World War II the study of regionalism, especially the ‘old regionalism’, was dominated by an empirical focus on Europe. Although the neofunctionalists were somewhat conscious of their own Eurocentrism, in their comparative analyses they searched for those ‘background conditions’ and ‘spill-over’ effects that could be found in Europe (Hettne, 2003; Haas, 1961). During the era of such old regionalism, European integration theories were developed for and from the European experience and then more or less re-applied or exported around the world. All too often (but not always) the EC/EU was then seen and advocated as the model, and other looser and informal modes of regionalism were, wherever they appeared, characterised as ‘different’ or ‘weaker’. This bias still prevails in parts of the scholarly literature. For instance, Christiansen (2001: 517) illustrates the dangers of this privileging of Europe-centric understandings of regionalism in his assertion that ‘on the whole, these forms of regionalism [in the rest of the world] differ from European integration in only focusing on economic matters and relying on a very limited degree of institutionalisation.’ Hence, regionalism in (Western) Europe is, according to this view, considered multidimensional and highly institutionalised – both a descriptive and prescriptive contention – whereas regionalism in the rest of the world is seen as only weakly institutionalised and reduced to an economic phenomenon. In our view, these types of generalisations are problematic and often misleading.

This weakness in the field is confirmed by two renowned scholars of European integration, Alex Warleigh and Ben Rosamond (2005), who argue that large parts of recent EU studies scholars have considered the EU as a nascent, if unconventional, polity in its own right ('the famous N=1 problem'). This parochialism has contributed little, Warleigh and Rosamond assert, in deepening our understanding of the EU as a political system, and it has ironically also reinforced the notion that the EU is *sui generis*, thereby down-playing the respects in which the EU remains more like other regionalist projects around the world. We agree with Warleigh and Rosamond's solution, namely that EU studies need to return to the broader ambitions of the comparative (and classical) regional integration theory, at least as far as the development of generalisable and comparative conceptual and theoretical frameworks are concerned. Here it needs saying that, according to Rosamond, the early neofunctionalists were not Eurocentric and actually had genuinely comparative ambitions (cf. Rosamond 2005).

If focus is changed from EU integration studies to IR/IPE theories of comparative regionalism, we can detect that especially variants of realist and liberal frameworks are also plagued by Europe-centred generalisations, which limit their ability to contribute to a more 'globally' applicable comparative regionalism. Attention to North America and Asia-Pacific has indeed been significant, but has been marked by a dominant concern simply to explain variation from the 'standard', European, case. As one authoritative scholar asserts, 'the study of comparative regionalism has been hindered by so-called theories of regionalism which turn out to be little more than the translation of a particular set of European experiences into a more abstract theoretical language' (Hurrell, 2005: 39).

Related to this is the fact that much of the mainstream IR literature has a rather narrow empirical selection. It is, for instance, revealing that one of the key mainstream contributions to IR regionalism, that of Mansfield and Milner (1997), entirely ignores Africa and all regional organisations on that continent. This and several similar volumes seem to believe that meaningful and efficient regionalism is happening only, or primarily, in the 'core' regions of Europe and North America (Coleman and Underhill, 1998). Apart from the inherent problems of such a narrow empirical selection for theorising about comparative regionalism, the problem lies in the ways the underlying assumptions and

understandings about the nature of regionalism, which stem from a particular reading of European integration, influence the description of what regionalism in the rest of the world does – and, moreover, should – look like. It bears reiterating, as well, that the overwhelming majority of mainstream IR scholars maintain a limiting focus on states as aggregated and unitary units, and/or on formal regional intergovernmental organisations. This is highly problematic. As Bach (1999: 1) points out with regard to African regionalism, '[o]utside Europe, the rebirth of regionalism during the late 1980s often had little to do with the numerous international organisations that were supposed to promote its development'. In sum, mainstream approaches in the field of IR and comparative regionalism can be characterised as introverted, ignorant of critical and reflective approaches and, at worst, largely irrelevant to an analysis and understanding of regionalisms outside Western Europe and North America. Breslin and Higgott (2000: 343) are correct in that: 'Ironically, the EU as an exercise in regional integration is one of the major obstacles to the development of analytical and theoretical comparative studies of regional integration.'

Whereas the mainstream IR literature has been biased towards a rather conventional interpretation of the EU, the problem has rather been the reverse in much of the so-called 'new regionalism' literature in IR, in our view especially the radical and postmodern variants. According to Warleigh and Rosamond (2005), many of these IR scholars have made a caricature of the EU and/or of orthodox integration theory (especially neofunctionalism), which has resulted in a failure to learn from both its successes and its failures. Presumably because of the exaggeration of differences between old and new forms of regionalism, Warleigh and Rosamond argues, the new regionalism scholars in IR have not engaged with EU studies scholars or older forms of integration theory. Some new regionalism scholars (such as Bøås *et al* 1999) have deliberately rejected the case of Europe and instead developed a regional approach specifically for the South. Their theorising efforts are both innovative and thought-provoking, but they are upholding the rather misleading N=1 problem that some EU integration scholars have constructed on their side. There is clearly a somewhat sceptic attitude towards Europe in critical new regionalism studies. As an example, one of us once called Europe "the paradigm" for new regionalism

(Hettne 2001), which, although it was not meant as a model to apply, was fiercely criticised by our more radical colleagues. Similarly, our efforts to theorise the rise of regionness as a heuristic tool for comparative analysis (Hettne, 1993, 2003, 2005; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000), have also been heavily criticised by the same scholars for being overly Eurocentric and too similar to classical integration theory.

In many ways we agree with Warleigh and Rosamond's assertion that many of the so-called new regionalism scholars in the critical and radical camp (in some ways including ourselves) have missed the opportunity to take advantage of the richness of the EU as a project and the impressive research on the project. Few can dispute that the EU as a region is diverse and as a result there has been an explosion of interesting theorising. Hence, there is no single EU mode of governance but a series of different interpretations of the EU (see Wiener and Diez, 2003), and, that this richness as well as ambitious theorising ought to have at least a potential positive influence on IR regionalism. Warleigh and Rosamond's (2005) prescription is that IR and comparative regionalism 'cannot afford to lock itself away from the most advanced instance of regionalism in world politics' (i.e. the EU). But, as emphasised by Warleigh and Rosamond, there is a need for a conceptual and theoretical framework that can address the complexity of the field, and at the same time transcend the case of Europe itself. This is why there is such a great potential for bridging the gap between EU integration studies and IR regionalism.

The comparative method is certainly needed for the development of the field of regionalism, and for 'bridging the gap'. Since theory necessarily relies on some generalisations (beyond a single case), comparative analysis is also crucial for theory-building. Comparative analysis helps to guard against ethnocentric bias and culture-bound interpretations that can arise in too specialised or isolated an area study, as well as 'ethnocentric universalism' that can arise when the case of Europe misleadingly becomes the standard framework for analysing regionalism in the rest of the world.

Hence, it is crucial to move beyond the false universalism inherent in a selective reading of regionalism in the core, and in the EU in particular, and instead to conduct analysis through 'genuinely' comparative regionalism. As Hurrell (2005: 39) insists, rather than to try and understand other regions through the distorting mirror of Europe, it is better

to think in general theoretical terms and in ways that draw both on traditional IR theory and on other areas of social thought. But, as already indicated, it is important not to reinforce the dividing lines between European integration studies and IR regionalism, and instead enhance communication and make the two fields of specialisation mutually reinforcing. This is only possible if the case of Europe is integrated within a larger and more general discourse of comparative IR regionalism, built around general concepts and theories (but still showing cultural sensitivity); hence a comparative IR regionalism which is not 'afraid' of European integration.

Our argument is that there is certainly a need for detailed analyses and case-studies of various regions around the world, including European integration (as well as other regional specialisations). The main limitation of such specialisations are that it is difficult to generalise and build theories on the basis of these regions left alone. There is a real need for comparison: 'when conducted properly, the comparative approach is an excellent tool ... In particular, it is a key mechanism for bringing area studies and disciplinary studies together, and enhancing both. It provides new ways of thinking about the case studies whilst at the same time allowing for the theories to be tested, adapted and advanced' (Breslin and Higgott, 2000: 341). In this sense we agree with Warleigh and Rosamond (2005) and their quest for a new research agenda on comparative regional integration. But comparative regionalism is not enough in itself, and we would like to add a third component that is required for a more complete understanding of regions and regionalism, namely to go beyond regionalism *per se* and understand the regional dimension in global transformation (i.e. which is closely connected with the exogenous dimension of regionalism). The meaning of this component is elaborated in detail in the next section.

Bridging Globalisation and Regionalism

Much of the more recent debate on regionalism is strongly focused on conditions related to globalisation or world order. In particular, the relationship between globalisation and regionalism constitutes one of the main concerns in the research field. This contrasts with many (but not all) earlier regionalism theories, which were heavily concerned with the

endogenous forces of regional integration or intra-regional theorising (Hurrell, 2005). Contemporary regionalism is thus strongly related to globalisation (and hence the exogenous dimension), but there are, as we shall see below, different views about the nature of this relationship. Our analysis rejects any simplified notions about how globalisation and regionalism hang together, instead drawing attention to the diversity of relationships. In fact, in a globalised world, regionalism as such is not the appropriate object for theorising; the focus should rather be on the regional factor or dimension of global transformation.

From dichotomy to diversity

Trade blocs have been a crucial aspect in the discussion of regionalism ever since the 1950s. According to neoclassical economics, regional trading arrangements are often seen as a ‘second-best’ and therefore judged according to whether they contribute to a more closed or more open multilateral trading system, embodied in the so-called ‘stumbling block vs. stepping stone’ dichotomy. Many of the regional trading arrangements that existed during the era of regionalism in the 1950s and 1960s were inward-looking and protectionist, and were often regarded by contemporary economists as failures. At the time, however, they were widely considered to be instruments for enhancing industrial production, as in the strand of development thinking associated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and the even more ambitious strategy of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), both led by Raúl Prebisch. The culmination of this process was the demand for a new international economic order (NIEO). Regionalism developed into a form of global mobilisation against an unequal world order, but lost some of its strength in the process.

When regionalism returned in the mid-1980s the stumbling block vs. stepping stone dichotomy reappeared, sometimes under the banner of ‘the new protectionism’ vs. ‘open regionalism’. The new protectionism was basically an early interpretation of the new wave of regionalism by neoliberal economists who feared that the sudden interest in regionalism heralded a new protectionism. Thus, for the neoliberals, regionalism was ‘new’ mainly in

the sense that it represented a revival of protectionism or neomercantilism, whereas other economists and liberal observers drew attention to that closure of regions was not on the agenda; rather, the current regionalism was ‘open regionalism’, which emphasised that the integration project should be market-driven and outward-looking, should avoid high levels of protection and should form part of the ongoing globalisation and internationalisation process of the world political economy (Anderson and Blackhurst, 1993; de Melo and Panagariya, 1993). Cable and Henderson (1994: 8) defined ‘open regionalism’ as a ‘negotiating framework consistent with and complementary to GATT’. To say the least there are a significant number of economists and IPE scholars of a liberal orientation that favour the current drive towards such open regionalism.

Many critical scholars (in IR/IPE) also agree that current regionalism is above all to be understood as open regionalism, but consider it to be a problem rather than a virtue. For instance, a pair of the most eminent scholars in the field, Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne (1996b: 251), claim that ‘one of the most striking characteristics common to all the regionalist projects is their commitment to open regionalism’, which tends to reinforce the detrimental effects of economic globalisation and global capitalism. Gamble and Payne believe that there is a long way to go before contemporary regionalism contributes to social regulation and social control, which in their view could be achieved by regulatory regionalism rather than neoliberal ‘open regionalism’ (also see Gamble and Payne, 2003).

It is misleading to argue that globalisation is a singular and linear project; alternative reactions and directions are also possible. Still, the conventional discussion — about whether regionalism constitutes a stumbling block vs. building block — continues to influence much of the discussion on the topic. To a large extent globalisation and regionalism have become competing ways of understanding the world, and much analytical work has been devoted (or wasted?) in trying to clarify how the two processes are related.

Our message is that we need to transcend simple dichotomies, which are reinforced by the stumbling block vs. stepping stone controversy, and instead take into account the diversity of relationships between globalisation and regionalism. A recent edited volume grouping some of the most prominent theorists in the field, *Theories of New Regionalism* (Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003), clearly emphasises that any simple relationship between

globalisation/multilateralism and regionalism needs to be challenged. In fact, more or less all theorists in this edited collection (albeit some more than others) state that globalisation and regionalisation produce their own counterforces with mixed outcomes in different regions. In addition, the infamous dichotomy is reductionist in its content since both ‘economic globalists’ as well as proponents of regions as ‘stepping stones’ neglect the turbulence and contradictions inherent in the globalisation/regionalisation dyad. One group of authors in the volume, Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (2003), claim that we are dealing with different layers and overlapping processes and nexuses of globalisation and regionalisation simultaneously; what these authors refer to as the ‘weave-world’. Another contributor, Bob Jessop (2003), highlights a large number of micro-regional and rescaling activities that lead to new cross-border micro-regions — all which are closely related and occurring within contexts of both globalisation and macro/meso-regionalisation.

Yet another of the respected authors in the volume, Helge Hveem (2003), draws particular attention to regional projects and the alternative ways whereby these can ride on, reinforce, reject, hinder or hedge globalisation. In a somewhat similar fashion, but referring specifically to multilateralism, Diana Tussie (2003) also argues for a more subtle understanding:

regionalism thrives in the policy spaces left by multilateralism but that at the same time when these lacunae are too many or too wide these tensions are then re-played in the multilateral sphere. In this sense the focus on these neglected games allows us to move away from one-dimensional views that posit regionalism and multilateralism as dilemmas of building blocks versus stumbling blocks (Tussie, 2003: 100).

It also needs saying that the stumbling block vs. building block dichotomy is formulated and defined from a particular standpoint whereby the end-goal of globalisation/multilateralism automatically becomes the ‘best of all worlds’. Thus, the dichotomy has, clearly, been formulated ‘for someone and for some purpose’ to use Coxian language. One result of this critical attitude of the project of economic globalisation is that *politics* of assorted kinds has again been recognised to be important for both empirical and normative reasons. Building on the thinking of Karl Polanyi, Hettne (2003) develops a

comprehensive argument in favour of ‘the return of the political’ in the overall context of globalisation. The argument is that, according to a non-liberal and more sceptical view, the liberal project of globalism is not realistic; the unregulated market system is analogous to political anarchy, and consequently there is a need to ‘politicise the global’, which in our view is the same thing as ‘taming globalisation’. This serves as an example of how we may understand the regional dimension in the context of global transformation. Such analysis depends on a global perspective and therefore has to go ‘beyond regionalism’ in itself, including comparative regionalism (cf. Hettne 2005), and which also has been referred to as *The Global Politics of Regionalism* (Farrell, Hettne and van Langenhove, 2005).

Taming Globalisation: ‘Politicising the global’³

In a comprehensive research programme on regionalism carried out during the second half of the 1990s one of the basic assumptions was that regionalism constituted an integral, albeit contradictory part of globalisation (Hettne et al, 1999-2001). This raised the issue of how to conceive globalisation in theoretical terms. Since globalisation by definition is a worldwide, multidimensional process about which there can be no meaningful explanatory theory, we have to choose a more specific and delimited entry point for the study of globalisation and the role of regionalism. In the theory of economic history associated with Karl Polanyi, an expansion and deepening of the market is supposedly followed by a political intervention ‘in defence of society’; the expansion of market exchange constituting the *first*, and the societal response the *second* movement, together making ‘the double movement’ (Hettne, 1999, 2003).

This represents a dialectic and in our view more nuanced understanding of globalisation compared to the simplified dichotomy discussed above, hence emphasising contradiction and change. Regionalism is thus part of both the first and second movement, with a neoliberal face in the first, and a more interventionist orientation in the second. There is thus a transnational struggle over the political content of

³ This section draws on Hettne (2003).

regionalism/regionalisation, as well as over that of globalisation. It is important to note that both movements, albeit through different dynamics, are engineered by political forces and actors. The first sequence of the double movement implies a deliberate institutionalisation of market exchange and the destruction of institutions built for social protection, a destruction euphemistically called ‘deregulation’ or even ‘liberalisation’ in line with the ideology of globalism. According to Polanyi, the resulting turbulence and social unrest leads to attempts at re-regulation, new institutions of social welfare adapted to the new political economy created through the transformation. In the historical transformation analysed by Polanyi these institutions were an integral part of the modern nation-state.

The re-embedding of the economy is never final. The dysfunctions typically associated with the second movement and its various forms of political intervention and regulation lead to a renewed defence and increased popularity of market solutions. Regulation becomes the problem. Friedrich von Hayek, disgusted with the interventionist ideological menu of the 1930’s, expressed early warnings against political regulation, described as *The Road to Serfdom*, the title of his famous book, published in the same year as Karl Polanyi’s equally classic *The Great Transformation* (1944). However, he had to wait long, until the 1970s, for market solutions to become the predominant approach.

Let us now apply the Polanyian dialectical approach to the current situation of growing dissent about the benefits of neoliberalism and the view of the market as a bad master rather than as a good servant. In accordance with the double movement thesis — that market exchange and political regulation (mediated by social movements) constitute the basic dialectics of a changing political economy — contemporary economic globalisation, or the globalist project, can be seen as an effort to institutionalise the market system on a global scale. This means that the trends towards the creation of regional formations throughout the world can be seen as one political attempt (among others) to manage the social turbulence implied in such a radical deregulation, unprecedented in terms of its global scope. This does not mean that globalisation is uniformly ‘economic’ and regionalisation ‘political’. In both processes political decisions shaped by contesting social and political forces are crucial, and the consequences in terms of distribution of resources are deeply political. As stressed above, the distinction between economic and political must

not be exaggerated. Here ‘political’ will normally refer to efforts at creating political communities on various levels of the world system; but depoliticisation or deregulation is nevertheless also political in its redistributive consequences.

Karl Polanyi’s account of the rise and fall of market society was very simple, perhaps even simplistic, but he nevertheless pointed at one very strong and useful generalisation. An institutionalised balance between society, state and market — as a dialectic outcome of the two processes forming part of the Great Transformation — can be called a ‘Great Compromise’. The Bretton Woods system that emerged after the Second World War was in fact such a compromise. Using a Polanyian term, Ruggie (1998: 62) labelled this system ‘embedded liberalism’, more precisely defined as transnational economic multilateralism combined with domestic interventionism. If the last two decades have been characterised by the predominance of economics, the time seems to have come for a ‘return of the political’ in order for another balance, or Great Compromise, to be established. From a Polanyian perspective the point is not only a return of ‘the political’ but equally much a ‘return of the social’, and even a ‘return of the moral’. Thus the second movement is something much wider than state intervention, or for that matter regionalism. Regionalism is only one possible political response, important for its effort to retain the territorial imperative.

If the globalist project to institutionalise the market system on a global scale can be seen as the first phase of a (second) ‘great transformation’ in Polanyi’s sense of the word, we should thus expect various political forces to shape the future course of globalisation; in other words to ‘politicise’ it (in the sense of democratic, civil society control). This will be done in competition between forces that are neither mutually compatible nor necessarily benevolent. Stated in this open way, there is little in Polanyi’s theorising that provides a firm base for forecasting the design of future political structures. Furthermore, ‘the second great transformation’ takes place in a global context, with different manifestations in different parts of the world. Some of these manifestations are local protests, many which are not very dissimilar from the countermovements in the original transformation. To be counted as part of a ‘second’ transformation the countermovements should, however, address global issues, even in their local manifestations. This means that they search for a

global agenda, realising that local power-holders do not exercise full control and that challenges as well as counterforces express relations between different societal levels. 'Resistance is localized, regionalized, and globalized at the same time that economic globalization slices across geopolitical borders' (Mittelman, 2000: 177). We should not expect a uniform response to this 'great transformation', but, as history shows, many forms of resistance, constructive as well as destructive (Gills, 2000). And regionalism is only one of them.

Conclusion

Regionalism is a multidimensional phenomenon, which explains the richness of concepts, theories and perspectives on the topic. Although this pluralism is desirable in many ways, the research field is plagued by a lack of communication between different theoretical perspectives and standpoints. This paper pinpoints that three divides in particular can be overcome: (i) the divide between 'old' and 'new' regionalism; (ii) the divide between European integration scholars and IR regionalism, and (iii) the simplified notions about how globalisation and regionalism are related.

The first part of the paper discussed the transition from old to new regionalism, and the continuities and discontinuities involved. Since the new regionalism now has two decades behind it, this may be the time to bury the distinction and recognise the study of regionalism as a search for a moving target, even if this leaves us with a complicated ontological problem. We are not quite sure about the object of study.

One discontinuity that emerges in retrospect is thus the stronger normative and prescriptive nature of the early debate, whether the point of departure was federalism, functionalism or neofunctionalism. The idea was to achieve peace by moving beyond the Westphalian logic to find institutionalised forms of permanent international cooperation. The more recent debate is generated much more by the erosion of national borders and the urgent question of how to find an alternative order beyond Westphalia. Neofunctionalism, the only one of the three early approaches with theoretical ambitions, was dismissed before regionalism (or regional integration which was the preferred concept) had shown its real

face. There was a lively debate without much happening on the ground, or perhaps it is more correct to say that whatever happened in the field of regional integration was distorted by the bipolar world order. Based on this poor showing in the real, empirical world, the critics, mostly realists, had a fairly easy task in questioning the viability of and the case for regional integration. The new wave of interest in regionalism should thus be seen in the context of an ending of Cold War and a beginning of globalisation. The challenge now, in other words, is to theorise a fast emerging empirical phenomenon without much theory to work from. In order to meet this challenge there is a need to consolidate the research field and bridge the gap between earlier and more recent theorising.

Regarding the second divide, EU integration studies has largely been separated from IR regionalism studies, even if mainstream IR literature have focused heavily on the European experience and tried to generalise from this example. Important sections of radical and critical IR regionalism have on their part deliberately avoided the case of Europe, thereby reinforcing the misinterpretation that Europe is 'different' from the rest of the world, a belief which prevails in large parts of European integration studies. But the lack of communication between EU integration studies and IR regionalism can be overcome. Our argument is that we need three-folded approach to the study of regionalism, which can be combined in different ways: (i) there is a need for detailed analyses and case-studies of various regions around the world, including European integration and any other regional specification (mono, inter- or multidisciplinary); (ii) there is a need for genuine comparative regionalism studies, which includes but also goes beyond the case of Europe; but this is not enough, and (iii) there is a need to go beyond comparative regionalism in itself, and analyse the regional dimension in global transformation, especially the taming of globalisation through politicising the global, which is related to the third divide.

Much of the more recent debate on regionalism is above all concerned on the relationship between globalisation and regionalism. Hence, regionalism is strongly related to globalisation, but there are many oversimplified ways to describe how they hang together. Important sections of the literature is dichotomising globalisation and regionalism, whereby the regionalism is simply seen as either a stumbling block or a stepping-stone towards the latter. This dichotomy has at least two major weaknesses. First,

it is built on a particular ideological and theoretical perspective which is biased in favour of economic globalisation/multilateralism at the expense of other notions about world order and the regulation of the global political economy. Second, it is built around a simplified dichotomy, which neglects the diversity of relationships between globalisation and regionalism. In our view there is a need for more nuanced perspective that is capable of analysing and explaining the variety of ways whereby globalisation and regionalism are related and impact on each other. There are of course several possible perspectives, but our preferred model is the dialectical approach associated with Karl Polanyi, whereby globalisation can be tamed through 'politicising the global'. Regionalism can make up such political and countermovement strategy, which will take on with different manifestations in different parts of the world.

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Theorising Comparative Regionalisation: Intradisciplinarity and the Study of Regions in Europe, Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Alex Warleigh-Lack. Draft Chapter prepared for P. Murray (ed) *Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming).
Regionalism Studies Old and New – Legacies and Potential for Comparison Although space restrictions rule out a major review of the literature here (see Warleigh 2004b, Warleigh 2006, Warleigh-Lack 2006, on which this section draws), it is worth reprising the main achievements and legacies of scholarship in the two fields with regard to the comparative study of regionalism because it is against this background that the following section of the chapter has particular meaning. In international relations, regionalism is the expression of a common sense of identity and purpose combined with the creation and implementation of institutions that express a particular identity and shape collective action within a geographical region. Regionalism is one of the three constituents of the international commercial system (along with multilateralism and unilateralism).