Research Note

Capacity-building Interregionalism - An Actorness Based Approach

Georg Lammich*

Introduction

International relations are no longer regarded as being solely governed by power politics or cooperation-oriented motives but instead by a complex mixture of policies influenced by neo-realist and institutionalist principles. The variation of this mixture depends upon context and cognitive factors, such as previous interactions and historical experiences, which shape the perspective of actors (Hänggi et al. 2006: 10). In his study of Interregionalism, Roloff (2001) combines Waltz's (1979) neo-realistic approach with the idea of complex interdependence from Keohane and Nye (1977) to demonstrate that interregional relations result from cooperative behaviour between various actors, as well as institutional balancing.[1] The interaction between interdependence and polarisation creates space for the emergence of different types of interregional cooperation with varying functional logics. A set of interregional functions developed by Rüland (2001, 2002, 2010) and Doidge (2011), amongst others, which draw upon the most prominent IR theories – neorealism, liberal Institutionalism and constructivism – offer a framework for the analysis of the performance of interregional processes, as well as the interests of participating actors (Baert and Scaramagli 2014). Rüland (2001, 2002) highlights balancing, institution building, rationalising, agenda setting and identity building as the central functions for assessing the portfolio of Interregionalism. Doidge divides these functions in two categories depending upon the actor constellations: an *'externally focused, globally active interregionalism'* and an *'internally focused, capacity building interregionalism'* (Doidge 2011: 52). The first category conceptualises Interregionalism as a reaction to external challenges; regions and their member states attempt to counter the negative effects of globalisation and transnational threats.

* Research Associate, Institute for Political Science, University Duisburg-Essen, Germany, Contact: Georg.Lammich@uni-due.de

Published online, February 2023

[1] Interregionalism as defined by Hänggi (2000) can either refer to relations between regional groupings (pure interregionalism), arrangements where states from different regions participate in an individual capacity (transregionalism), or relations between regional groupings and single powers (hybrid interregionalism).

Systemic functions of Interregionalism

Rüland (2001) considers balancing one of the most crucial external variables for explaining the emergence of interregional cooperation schemes; he refers to a realistic conceptualisation of a competition between different actors that leads – on an individual basis or as part of a temporary coalition – to an accumulation of power. Institutional power, leverage in international organisations and the shaping of global economic processes are increasingly becoming important resources for states attempting to improve their positions in the global system by engaging in regional, and consequently interregional, processes (Hulse 2015: 33). States can cooperate with interregional institutions or even mandate them with tasks that affect national sovereignty. The theoretical debate distinguishes between two forms of balancing: (neo) realistic 'power balancing', associated with a military component, and non-military manifestations, such as 'Institutional balancing' (Valle 2008), 'soft balancing' (He and Feng 2008) and 'hedging' (Drechsel 2016), all of which represent variations of a combination of realistic and institutional approaches (Rüland 2014: 24). Security, the primary focus of the balance of power approach, is negotiated unilaterally between world powers, or sometimes in an intraregional manner, which in either case leaves limited space for interregional coalitions. In contrast to traditional concepts of security, the economic sphere provides more opportunities for the formation and competition of interregional alliances. The increasing importance of institutions and global governance for world politics has thus led to a rearrangement of power resources for nation-states from military might to institutional power.

The economic powerhouses in Europe, Asia and North America attempt to balance the international economic system through cooperation amongst themselves or with third-party states and regions (Hulse 2015: 34). Following this logic of institutional balancing between global economic blocks and the integration of the economic periphery through interregional arrangements, transregional economic zones can be interpreted as resulting from a power struggle between various regions competing in a globalised market. The founding of APEC in 1989 can thus be regarded as a reaction to the increasing integration of the European common market and the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA), reached in 1987. In return, the economic convergence of the APEC states sparked fears in Europe of exclusion from the Asian market, which led to the establishment of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996. For participating states in Asia, ASEM again presented an opportunity to confine the growing influence of the US and Japan in Southeast Asia (Hänggi et al. 2006; Valle 2008).

Another example of this type of interregional economic balancing is the relationship between the EU and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), initiated by Brussels as a reaction to US plans to begin FTA negotiations with South America (Valle 2008). Interregionalism in these cases comprises an attempt of states or regional groupings to balance international constellations considered threats to their own economic interests. Interregional processes respond to power shifts within the triad and have an equating effect towards external regional arrangements (Rüland 2002: 2).

Interregional dialogues can also have a *rationaliser* function and serve as discussion platforms preceding multilateral and global institutional debates. Interregionalism transfers the decision-making process from the multipolar global stage to a less complex level with fewer participants and often less diverse interests, which facilitates the negotiation process (Hulse 2015: 35). Several problems typically associated with multilateral fora can be moderated by shifting negotiations to the interregional level. Small numbers and established communication channels

and institutions, as well as a perceived normative proximity of the involved actors, lower information and transaction costs and increase the transparency – although not the legitimacy – of decisions. Regional hegemons see their position less threatened in smaller circles, and peripheral regions and states can build interregional coalitions to balance the influence of dominant powers (Doidge 2011: 40).

A similar function for interregional dialogues is as *agenda setter* in international fora, where pre-negotiated positions can benefit the interests of certain actor groupings (Rüland 2002: 10). Authors such as Doidge (2008a, 2011) and Dent (2004: 228) identify the same arguments as for rationalising: small numbers, greater cohesion and common interests between interregional actors.

These systemic functions of Interregionalism derive primarily from the external relations of the European Union and cannot easily be transferred to explain interregional arrangements outside of the triad (Doidge 2011; Hardacre 2009). The EU, as the most advanced regional organisation, has a unique level of institutional and economic capabilities, a high density of normative integration and the highest level of international presence amongst the myriad existing ROs. Assumptions based on interregional dialogues with EU participation do not reflect the reality of non-EU cooperation (Lammich 2020; Hamanaka 2021; Lucia-Lopez and Mattheis 2021). The reactive character of inter- and transregional relations responding to the changes and dynamics of the global system requires pragmatic and flexible structures and capacities lacking in many regions. For a better understanding of the different capacities of regional organisations to utilise the functional variety and empirical heterogeneity of Interregionalism, the concept of 'actorness' is a useful variable: Actorness can be defined as 'the ability of regional organizations (ROs) to act deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system' (Sjöstedt 1977: 16).

Actorness in Interregionalism

Interregionalism refers, on the one hand, to political and economic relations between two more or less institutionalised regional actors and, on the other hand, to a deepening of interaction and cooperation between two separate regions. The various theoretical approaches to Interregionalism all share the understanding that regions can develop the capacity to act as a single entity and that this ability can manifest through external relations. Hindess defines an actor as '[...] a locus of decision and action where the action is in some sense a consequence of the actor's decisions' (Hindess 1988: 45).

Regional actorness is a multidimensional concept that has been operationalised quite differently since the 1970s. Beginning from Sjöstedt's (1977) social constructivist premise that an actor's identity and behaviour are influenced by complex social processes and interactions, many scholars have focussed on the internal characteristics of regional organisations. The EU, as the most advanced regional organisation on the international stage, has often been in the centre of the regional actorness debate. Within the discussion of EU agency, some authors have extended the theoretical scope of regional actorness and stressed the importance of institutional setting (Chaban et al. 2006), ideological factors (Manners 2002) or military capacities (Larsen 2002). Many studies of regional actorness attempt to compare the structures of regional actors with other state or non-state actors, international regimes or international organisations (Murau and Spandler 2015: 931).

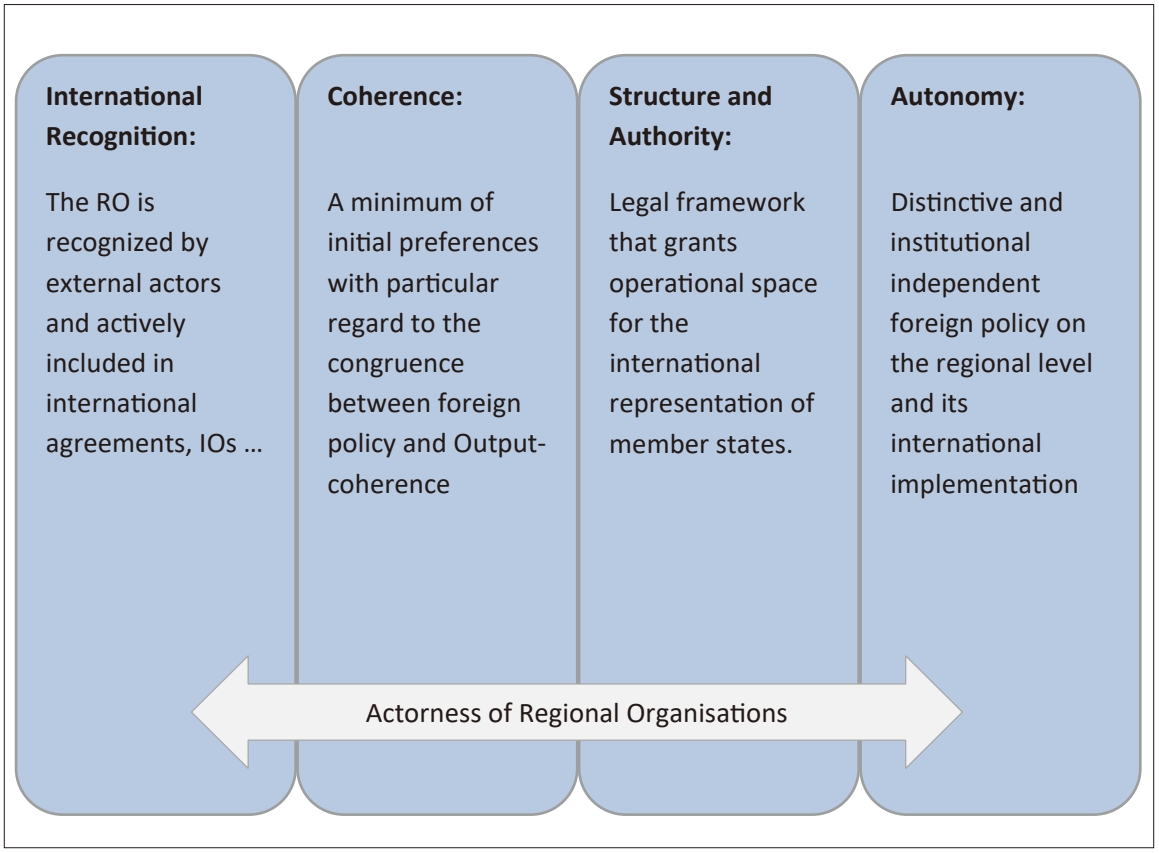
For the analysis of actorness as a determinant for the functional range of Interregionalism, the following paragraph introduces an analytical framework that not only includes a proof of the capacity to act but also measures the intensity of such interactions. Based on the work of Bretherton and Vogler (2006) and Doidge (2011), regional actorness is conceptualised as a

specific feature of regional organisations, not as a behavioural outcome. For the development of a systematic framework to analyse regional actorness four criteria that refer to the work of Jupille and Caporaso (1998) and Doidge (2011) can be defined: international recognition, coherence, authority and autonomy.

These dimensions of regional actorness are related. Autonomy is not a sufficient criterion for international actorness if there is no international recognition, and in the same way, a legal framework for the implementation of certain regional positions needs some internal coherence to agree with these common positions (Groenleer and Van Schaik 2007: 972).[2]

Following the institutional logic that formal and informal institutions impact the capacity of regional organisations to act, the analysis of actorness could entail rational choice approaches, as well as concepts from a sociologic (neo-)Institutionalism (Groenleer und Van Schaik 2007: 973; –Hall 1996; Peters 1999; Jupille et al. 2003). While sociologic approaches consider the importance of common norms and values and the social environment of institutions, this analytic framework focusses on formal and legal mechanisms and structures of regional organisations and regards institutions as the regulative factor for the measurement of actorness. *Coherence* thus means the development of common preferences for basic goals, even if no consensus can be reached during the discussion and implementation of specific policy packages. In the same way, formal and legal competences and the actual scope for manoeuvring are the determining

Figure 1: Dimension of actorness



[2] From the four categories of coherence identified by Jupille and Caporaso (2003) that describe different stages of political decision-making output-coherence, the degree of congruence, is the most important for the analysis of international capacities of regional organisations.

factors for the *autonomy and authority* of a regional organisation.

According to Bretheron and Vogler (2006), regions are international actors if member states are bound by a minimum of shared values and principals, can identify thematic priorities and transfer them to a coherent strategy and, finally, possess a certain degree of autonomy to act in the international system.

The analysis of regional actorness is the first step in assessing the functional spectrum of interregional processes, since it allows for an assessment of the potential of regional organisations to perform certain functions of Interregionalism. Interregional constellations wherein both partners have distinct actor capacities promote systemic, globally oriented functions, while a qualitative discrepancy in the actorness in an asymmetric setting facilitates capacity building effects on the side of the weaker party.

Capacity-building functions

The systemic functions of Interregionalism described above are primarily based on the analysis of the interregional partnerships of the European Union and represent a Eurocentric perspective that, in many cases, does not reflect the logic of Interregionalism from Southern actors (Doidge 2011; Hardacre 2009; Mattheis and Godsäter 2018). Olivet (2005: 12) notes that balancing – a central reason for cooperation within the triad – is inapt to explain the reasoning of actors with weak international capacities. The interest of global powers for trans- and interregional fora is based on the necessity to confront challenges within the multi-layered system of global governance. Despite trans- and interregional balancing, agenda setting and rationalising also impact the organisation of the international system, while other ancillary functions identified by Rüland have no immediate effect for the global level. While other authors such as van der Vleuten (2013), Mattheis and Godsäter (2018) and Ribeiro-Hoffmann (2016) see indications for a global alignment of interregional arrangements without EU participation, the lack of international actorness of peripheral regional organisations is not fully considered. 'Balancing' assumes a constant power struggle in the international system. While this concept traditionally referred to political and military might, with the ongoing process of globalisation, the economic sphere gained increased importance as a foundation for power. Through the inclusion of the economic dimension, the number and variety of significant actors in the international system has grown in recent decades (Doidge 2008: 43). Whereas states and, in particular, the economic heavyweights of the triad are still paramount, the position of regional organisations as players in the global 'balancing game' has improved. To compete in the international system and build interregional alliances, regional organisations need the ability to reach an intraregional consensus and adapt it to an everchanging global environment. The reactive character of inter- and transregional relations demands pragmatic and flexible structures that can be implemented quickly by all participants to preserve the advantages of political, economic or military balancing. The dynamics of international politics thus require a certain degree of international capacity and willingness to cooperate amongst the member states of a regional organisation. Actorness is a crucial factor for the efficacy of interregional arrangements to act in the global system and a basic condition for systemic functions.

In relation to the comparatively low level of actorness of ROs in the global South, the low degree of institutionalisation, the lack of military and political capacities amongst member states and – on a global level – the insignificant economic transactions amongst Southern regions, it is doubtful that alliances amongst these organisations can affect the international system that explains the motivation for interregional

cooperation. This paper argues that instead, internal capacity-building functions and direct effects for economic development are the primary motivation for the interregional agenda of many Southern ROs. Neither power balancing, as within the triad, nor soft balancing, as proposed by Ribeiro-Hoffmann (2016: 607), as alternative explanations for South–South Interregionalism are the chief reason for these organisations to engage with external actors. As He and Feng (2008: 365) and Rüland (2014) show, soft balancing that entails economic sanctions or '*strategic non-cooperation*' (Rüland 2014: 24) against a third party requires a certain degree of actorness and economic influence that exceeds the capacity of Southern ROs. If balancing in all its facets cannot be transferred from the functional logic of EU-led Interregionalism an alternative explanation for Interregionalism emanating from the global South is needed.

Lately more scholars have focussed on non-European cases of Interregioanslim asking questions about the drivers and consequences of South-South Interregioanlism (Bachmann 2019, Lammich 2020, Lopez-Lucia and Mattheis 2021, Hamanaka 2021).

Kingah and Akong (2016) have introduced a framework for South–South Interregionalism that distinguishes between external and internal drivers of Interregionalism and have named factors for the internal motivation of ROs to engage in interregional cooperation (Kingah and Akong 2016: 88). Due to economic turbulence in Europe and a diminishing importance of the EU as a model for successful integration, the authors assume a decreasing willingness amongst Southern ROs to mimic and adapt EU structures and mechanisms. A second internal motivation is, according to them, the rationalising and harmonisation of common positions and – particularly in the African case – the attempt to coordinate multiple regional communities and negate the effect of overlapping membership. The final motive is, in the tradition of the Bandung conference in 1955, the emancipation of Southern ROs from the dominant globalisation debate. South–South Interregionalism is, in this sense, a tool for ROs to delineate themselves from imperialistic connotations and expedite alternative development models (Kingah und Akong 2016: 89). Beyond these internal factors, they also regard external influence as a driver for interregional cooperation in the global South. The United Nations (UN) and its diverse bodies, such as the UN Office for South–South Cooperation and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), promote interregional networks and offer incentives and organisational support for interregional cooperation and, in some cases, even initiate it.[3] Furthermore, beyond UN institutions, several other organisations, such as the African Development bank (AfDB) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, support South–South Interregionalism (Kingah und Akong 2016: 90). External promotion is, however, limited to small thematic areas (such as the UN Interregional Crime Research Institute) or, as in the case of development banks is sector and project based. External influence as proposed by Kingah and Akong can influence Interregionalism in the global South but is not sufficient to explain the emergence of interregional dialogues that address a broad range of issues and are not tied to certain IOs. Also, the internal drivers for cooperation highlighted by them are not persuasive motivation for the interaction of Southern ROs. Although there is no doubt the recent economic

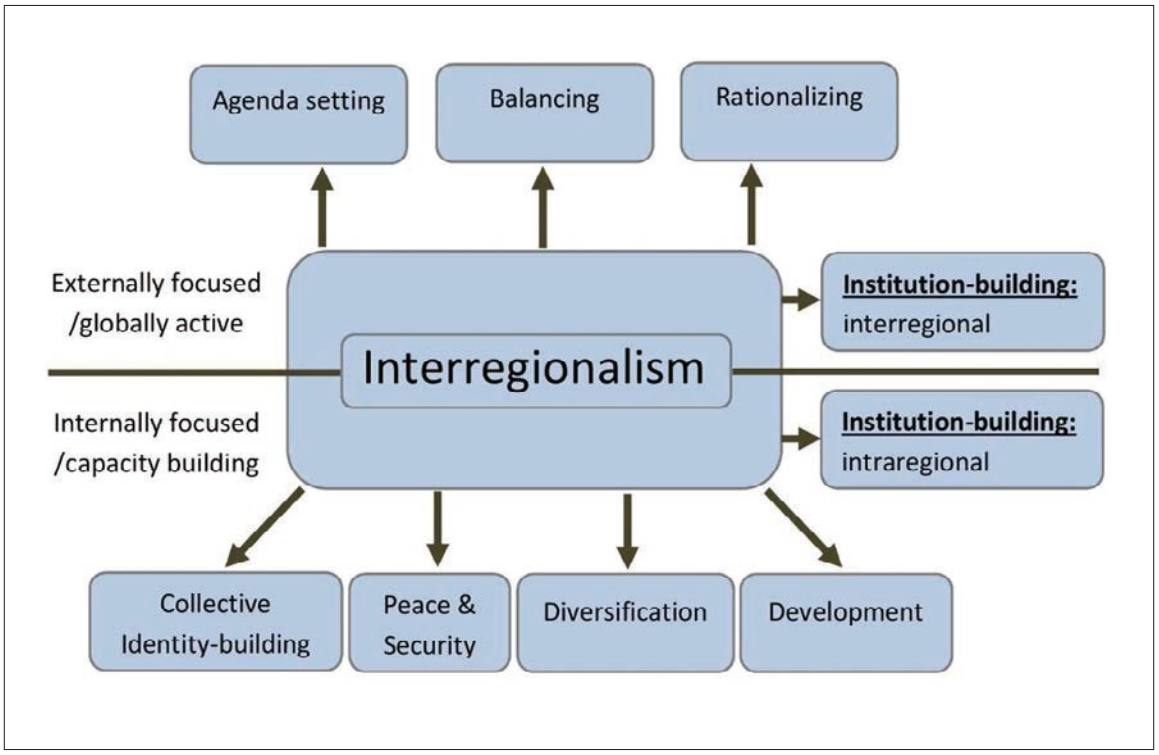
[3] Kingah and Akon refer here to the East Africa-South Asia Interregional Forum on Trade Facilitation, that was organised by UNCTAD. This initiative, that so far has been limited to one meeting in Geneva, seems however scant proof for a lasting impact of UNCTAD on new south-south cooperation mechanisms.
(https://unctad.org/en/Pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=445).

and political turbulences have limited the mojo of the EU as a prototype for regional integration, but as most existing interregional dialogues were initiated long before the Euro crisis, no recognisable pattern exists between their founding and the state of the EU. While dissociation from the Western model is a common rhetoric element of Southern dialogues on the bilateral, regional and interregional levels, it is seldom a primary driver for the decision to cooperate but rather a way to distinguish and emancipate one's own dialogue from a system dominated by Western actors that is often perceived as unequal. The most convincing argument, from Kingah and Akong, is the potential of Southern Interregionalism for rationalising and harmonisation in regions with multiple memberships and overlapping regionalism. Interregionalism within a region is often tied to Interregionalism between distinct regions that can range from trade negotiations topolitical dialogue to development aid (Mattheis 2016: 39).

For the analysis of peripheral interregional relations and the motives of Southern actors to engage in interregional dialogues, neither the focus on international influence as discussed by Rüland nor the combination of internal and external drivers as developed by Kingah and Akong hold sufficient explanatory power. In the following section, Rüland's model established for the analysis of North–North and North–South Interregionalism is refined and expanded to better explain the perspective and motivation of Southern ROs for interregional cooperation.

In contrast to the regional actors from the triad that have more or less elaborated domestic and international profiles, most Southern ROs have to date generally responded to the demands from exogenous forces instead of shaping their own policy space. Interregionalism has the potential to increase the internal and external recognition of ROs and strengthen the institutional capacity of an organisation. Through interactions with external partners, a regional body can increase its internal authority and substantiate its claim to act as a representative of all member states. Secondly, regional organisations can diversify their external relations, through cooperation with

Figure 2: Functions of Interregionalism



non-traditional partners, moderate the risks of a unilateral foreign policy orientation and counter their marginalisation in the international system (Olivet 2005: 13). Besides the aforementioned institution building and diversification that is regarded by Olivet as paramount, prosperity and security are the primary drivers of interregional cooperation in the global South. Many of these organisations have clear developmental agendas that prioritise economic development and regional security, and they transfer these agendas to their interactions with external partners. An asymmetric constellation in economic capacities is therefore an important criterion for the motivation of the weaker partner to actively engage in the cooperation.

The following section focusses on a set of interregional functions that are exerted in asymmetric settings and can be characterised as internal and capacity building. The actorness of the participating actors is regarded as an intervening variable that can explain the varying performance of interregional functions for different regions and settings. For external functions that are utilised by interregional actors to affect the global system – balancing, rationalising and agenda setting – a high degree of actorness is mandatory for all participating parties (Doidge 2014: 44). These functions depend on the ability of regional organisations to coordinate their internal positions and transfer them with some leeway to the interregional and global level to give room for compromise. In cases of an inadequate legal framework for the foreign and security policy of ROs, a structural deficit of decision-making and a lack of institutional capacity, the complex process of converting common (inter) regional positions to tangible policies in the international arena is hardly viable. In contrast, an actorness gap is beneficial for the performance of capacity-building functions such as intraregional institution building, development or identity building on the part of the less institutionalised and less developed partner. The final group of functions include those wherein actorness has no or a limited impact on the performance. Doidge (2014: 45) specifically counts interregional institution building amongst this group. The creation of interregional institutions such as a secretariat or an annual meeting involves, depending on the configuration and mandate of these new bodies, only a limited financial and organisational effort and can be implemented in most actorness constellations.

Institution building

The importance of institutions in interregional cooperation is particularly emphasised by the liberal perspective of Institutionalism, which sees institutions as crucial for the prevention of conflicts and the creation of cooperative problem solving and fundamental for the legality of international relations (Rüland 2001: 7; Doidge 2011: 36). Institutions can be conceptualised as either a set of formal and informal rules and regulations or as arenas for formalised political acts. The organisational dimension – the creation of formalised arrangements through the establishment of interregional structures and dialogues – is the most visible and tangible manifestation of institution building in Interregionalism. These institutionalised dialogue structures provide a framework for the discussion of topics that would not otherwise have been on the agenda of the participating states and regions (Doidge 2011: 36). Asymmetric interdependencies between ROs and external actors can affect the operability and effectiveness of regional institutions. Effectiveness can be operationalised as the convergence of the RO to the objectives of its members, along with the progress of regional integration in accordance with these objectives (Downs 2000: 43; Young 1992). In case of a positive impact on regional integration, the external actor facilitates the performance and functionality of

regional institutions and either provides an incentive for the intensification of regional cooperation or reduces the cost for new structures on a regional level. Within asymmetric constellations, financial assurances and pledges for interregional cooperation can cushion the risk of ROs to invest in institutions without guaranteed benefits (ex-ante institutionalisation).

External influence can also create additional risks or even negatively impact integration. Financial support creates dependencies and might dampen the willingness of member states to fund their own organisations. In cases where external resources cease to exist, ROs face a massive loss of capacity, or even institutional dissolution. External influence can also have a direct or indirect effect on the implementation and consolidation of regional structures(Muntschick 2012: 9). If expected gains from regional cooperation do not materialise, actors might switch their priorities from the regional to the external arena and dismantle institutions that are not oriented to interregional and external cooperation. Another aspect of institution building is 'regionalism through Interregionalism' as described by Hänggi (1999). The emergence of interregional cooperation sparks the need for better regional coordination prior to interregional negotiations. Interregional interaction fosters regional coordination in a response to the embeddedness or 'nesting' of regional structures in an interregional context (Doidge 2011: 37). As part of this process, regional capacities can increase or newly emerge. This endogenous process can be indirectly, or in a few cases, even directly affected by the interregional counterpart.[4] A difference in regional capacity and a positive perception of the benefits of higher levels of integration by the weaker regional actor are thereby preconditions for a positive external impetus.

Diversification

The diversification of economic and political relations is another motive of peripheral ROs to engage in interregional cooperation. Gradual integration into the international system instead of global balancing are the drivers for Interregionalism in the global South. Animated by the increasing supranational interdependencies in the political, economic and social arenas, ROs attempt to remain in political control, or at least influence the process of interregional and global densification. New partnerships are an option to strengthen regional actorness and counter political pressure from traditional partners. ROs from the global South are seeking alternatives to the triad and developing new avenues to access the global system to challenge their international marginalisation (Olivet 2005: 6). By creating multiple and multidimensional relations, ROs can increase their chances for cooperative yields and minimise the risk of external shocks and dependencies resulting from relations constricted to traditional partners. Political diversification increases the bargaining power of both actors towards a third party, particularly in the context of a North–South cooperation.[5] In multilateral negotiations where the participating Southern actors have similar interests, interregional cooperation can also enhance the collective bargaining position.

Economic diversification aims at encouraging reciprocal market entry, reducing trade barriers and improving investment conditions. Low levels of actorness by one or both partners can hamper a common political strategy, and heterogenous economic interests increase the preference for bilateral approaches. For Southern and peripheral ROs, several key sectors are pivotal for the development of international economic relations, including investment, industrial and fiscal policy and

4 Doidge (2011) illustrates this effect with the EU support programs for the integration in central America and ASEAN .

5 Olivet (2005) shows this effect with examples from ASEAN and Mercosur which increase there bargaining position towards the US and EU through interregional cooperation.

macroeconomic stability. Also, institutional variables on the national and regional levels and, in many cases, the security dimension influence the progress of economic diversification. ROs can contribute to diversification by supplementing relevant international capacities, strengthening networks with potential partners and implementing reforms and policies to promote new cooperation. An intended economic diversification is not just a political effort but must be accompanied by investments in human resources and infrastructure to develop key industries and set new incentives for economic cooperation. In contrast to political diversification, which can be implemented in the short to medium term, economic diversification is a long-term project requiring not only political will but also capital.

Development

Although we have seen through history numerous examples of regional cooperation, the nucleus of modern regionalism lies in the European integration process. In Europe, the primary emphasis of regional cooperation was cross-border industrialisation that could profit from the mutual exchange of goods and services and can be regarded as the cornerstone for increasing economic welfare. From this early stage of regionalism results the strong linkage between regional development and the pursuit of economic growth that is still recited today (Doidge 2007: 8). For regional and interregional networks in the global South, the limited effectiveness of these growth-oriented models developed in the context of Europe and its transatlantic relations has been long discussed.[6] The alternative development strategies resulting from these debates stretch from the increased self-sufficiency of peripheral states to a complete disassociation from the global economy. The state as a political actor was supposed to mobilise domestic resources and implement interventionist and protective measures to balance structural development hindrances. During that time, ROs in the global South were often characterised by a closed regionalism oriented towards industrialisation and import substitution (Panagariya 1998: 37). In the subsequent years – and reinforced by the end of the bipolar system – many countries in the South adopted neoliberal agendas, liberalised their economies and opened their markets to international competition and foreign investments. This market liberalisation changed not only the concept of development but also the structure of (inter-) regional alliances in the global South, which now focussed on the global economy (Doidge 2011: 13).

Economic deterritorialisation amplified the need for Southern countries to engage in regional organisations to prevent their political marginalisation by industrialised countries. The motivation for regional cooperation thus was no longer detachment from the global system but an effort to find collective approaches to access this system. The evolution from closed to an open regionalism is today also a primary characteristic for interregional activities in the global South. The external relations of ROs, and consequently Interregionalism, follow a paradigm of growth-led prosperity that benefits from the integration in global structures. Concurrent with changing self-conceptions, ROs in the global South emerged as institutionalised development entrepreneurs with a multidimensional mandate that transcended the economic sphere (Bruszt and Palestini 2016: 378; Yeates 2015: 5). Existing differences in socio-economic development are regarded as a hurdle for common prosperity that cannot be balanced by mere market liberalisation (Bruszt and Palestini 2016: 378). With the growing responsibilities and tasks heaved upon ROs came a rise in external donor support. Multilateral organisations

6 The dependency theory which emerged in the 1960s in the Latin American discourse offers a critical review of western modernization theory arguing that underdeveloped countries are not merely primitive versions of wealthy countries, but have unique features of their own.

such as the WTO, World Bank, IMF and of course the EU, as well as some states, now divert portions of their budgets towards ROs and projects at the regional level. Several empirical studies – mostly in regard to the EU's external relations – have shed light on interregional development cooperation (Söderbaum and Stalgren 2010; Mattheis and Godsäter 2018), but the theoretical dimension is still barely illuminated. Despite the limited scholarly debate about the interregional distribution of ODA, it is conceivable that, similarly to bilateral development cooperation, the needs and demands of target regions are secondary to donor interests (Stapel 2017). Economic and strategic considerations, the perpetuation of colonial dynamics, reputational gains and other indicators for donor interests are better explanatory factors for the allocation of interregional ODA then a low Human Development Index or per capita income (Söderbaum and Stalgren 2010: 156).

Security

During the era of the Cold War, a number of ROs emerged around the globe that featured a more or less pronounced security dimension in their agenda. On the African continent, ECOWAS and the SADC were founded; in central America arose the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and in Asia originated ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), regional platforms that had not only economic but also security-related motives. Yet, regional communities were almost non-existent in the security debate which was solely dominated by the conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs (Hanau-Santini 2014: 71–72). As a result of the superposition of regional orders by systemic competition, conflicts were effectively international events that surpassed regional control (Godehardt and Lembcke 2010: 6). After the end of the Cold War, new regional dynamics could evolve, and existing alliances were reinforced, which led to a new discourse on the security role of ROs. While inter-state conflicts did not disappear after the Cold War and nations remain important security factors, transnational threats and regional disputes have become more visible, and supra- and sub-state actors have gained importance. In the wake of the reform and restructuring of existing regional entities, such as the OAU or the European Economic Community, and the accompanying revaluation of security as an essential structural attribute of ROs, the first interregional cooperation with a security component emerged. Security was more or less extensively discussed in ASEM (Gilson 2002: 323; Hanau-Santini 2014: 72), APEC, the regional platform of ASEAN (ARF) – the latter with its own institutional security forum – and in context of the partnership between the AU and EU (Pirozzi 2012). The intended measures debated went from 'soft', trust-building instruments and preventive diplomacy to specific mechanisms for conflict resolution and direct (military) support. Another topic featured on several interregional agendas in recent years was the mutual fight against international terrorism. Despite these numerous attempts to create interregional security cooperation, few specific agreements have been adopted, and most talks have resulted in – if anything – the approval of joint protocols in key areas of conflict prevention or conflict management (Hanau-Santini 2014: 72).

As a result, ROs in the global South, most notably in Africa, have become more active in conflict resolution, and the role of regionalism for peace and security has become more prominent. For the changing recognition of African ROs as security actors.

At the same time, the number and variety of interregional relations and new patterns of transregional cooperation rose, which added another dimension to the international system. The role of these new interregional security co-operations also attracted

some scholarly attention (Hanau-Santini 2014; Plank 2017). While in the field of IR, these developments were mostly conceptualised through a reinterpretation of the regionalism theory, security studies have focussed mostly on regional security dynamics. As Hanau-Santini (2014) elaborates, the different approaches in this field – security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998), regional security complexes (Buzan and Weaver 2003) and regional orders (Lake and Morgan 1997) – have the potential to be transferred to interregional dynamics. Plank (2015:11) also regards '*security governance*', defined as an intentional system of rules that entails the coordination and regulation of conflicts by multiple and separate actors in formal and informal settings, as promising for the analysis of interregional security cooperation.

All of these approaches are context specific, and several factors impede interregional security cooperation. Geographic distance and heterogenous threats, but also cultural and political differences between ROs, can obstruct interregional cooperation in a field as complex and sensitive as security. The formal, organisational and normative prerequisites for the emergence of a new interregional governance level are only reached in a limited number of existing co-operations, excluding most South–South dialogues. While the threshold for a comprehensive cooperation in the sense of a security community or security complex is relatively high, Interregionalism also has the potential for partial cooperation in areas with mutual interest. Jervis (1982) describes such limited collaborations as *'security regimes*' wherein common norms are not a required condition for the development of partnerships. In contrast to the abovementioned concepts of interregional security – security communities, regional orders and security governance – regular interaction, basic accordance over norms and principles for interventions and mutual interest are sufficient conditions for an interregional security regime. Regional organisations can legitimise their security-related actions by including interregional partners and thus increase their approval from the international community. Even interregional co-operations that have extremely limited capacities or are only partially functionable can have a positive effect for an RO in advocating their position.

Identity building

The final function of capacity-building Interregionalism that also belongs the functional spectrum defined by Rüland (2001) is collective identity building, which is also the only function based on a constructivist rationale. Identity building can be conceptualised as either a driver or a result of the interregional process (Hulse 2014: 38). When considered a driver of Interregionalism, identity building can have an internal dimension that refers to identity formation by perceiving oneself as an actor in the international system or an external dimension, which includes the effects of the recognition of a region's actorness by third parties. Part of internal identity building is also the rising recognition of an RO as an individual international actor by its member states. This type of identity building occurs on the regional and sub-regional levels and creates a common identity that transcends national boundaries. By developing own actor qualities in their external relations, a regional organization creates its own entity that makes it delimitable from other external actors. The formation of institutional dialogues with other regions leads to an intrinsic understanding of 'regioness', which again is a condition for developing regional actorness (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2004: 15). This correlation between identity and international actorness has a positive effect on the propagation and consolidation of interregional dialogues. Regional actors reflect their own self-perceptions of international presence towards potential partners and thus stimulate

cooperation (Gilson 2002). In addition to an RO's rising awareness of its own agency, contact with another regional counterpart offers an additional impulse for identity building (Doidge 2008a: 50). Inclusion in interregional dialogues can exert both intended and unintended effects for regional identity building and comprise either a direct consequence of external impacts or a reactive measure to specific incentives. Amongst the intended interference in regional identity building are the direct support of regional groupings by external actors and the articulation of a preference for regional cooperation, with the aim of stipulating integration processes in other regions. Established ROs can attempt to utilise interregional dialogues to promote internal coherence and the adoption of regional norms and institutions in other parts of the world (see Hulse 2014: 39; Stapel 2017). The diffusion of regional structures and norms again exerts a positive effect on future interregional cooperation.

Collective identity building can also be a reaction to a certain behaviour or aspect of the interregional partner to better advance their own interest and exert influence in the given dialogue (Rüland 2006: 308). This enhancement of regional identity as a form of demarcation is a defensive tactic that is not a driver of future cooperation but a result of existing interactions. Participating in interregional processes and interactions with other external entities can be an important part of both the self- and foreign perceptions of ROs from the global South as coherent actors in the global system. In interregional dialogues, regional member states act as a singular entity and can be recognised as a unitary actor. Confrontation with other international actors and their political and cultural particularities can trigger a process of self-discovery that leads to better intraregional solidarity based on mutual norms, interests and political goals (Rüland 2002: 10).

Conclusion

This article focusses on a modified version of the analytical framework of Rüland (2001) on the functional logic of Interregionalism from a non-EU perspective. The inclusion of capacity-building functions can explain the effects and implications of the interregional interactions of Southern or peripheral ROs with limited international capacities. The basic assumption is that the 'traditional' systemic functions of Interregionalism – balancing, agenda setting and rationalising – are not fully adequate for development-oriented ROs in constellations wherein they engage with the EU or other powerful actors from the triad. In addition to varying levels of actorness, several other factors are also relevant for the performance of capacity-building Interregionalism. Organisations such as the African Union that are fairly well institutionalised and have a focus on development and security offer a very different context then the great number of peripheral ROs that view regionalism (and Interregionalism) primarily as an instrument for integration into the global economy. Functions such as development or security, as introduced in this article, require from an RO an internally oriented strategy that can serve as a point of access for interregional cooperation. Without existing regional initiatives in these areas, there is no reference for interregional projects either. In particular, the security aspect is an exclusion criterion for many Southern ROs. However, as Kacowicz and Press-Barnathan (2016: 300) note, the number of 'multi-purpose regional organisations' that increasingly connect their initial political and economic orientations with security aspects is rising. They list a total of 13 ROs that have security mandates and can be attributed to the global South (Kacowicz and Press-Barnathan 2016). Another relevant determinant for functional performance is the motivation of an interregional counterpart to engage in certain areas of interregional cooperation. In this

regard, the analytical framework seems to be transferrable to a wide range of actors other than the EU or US. Myriad new actors, such as China, Russia or India, have begun to develop comprehensive partnerships with ROs in the global South. With a change of perspective, interregional arrangements between European regionalism and an RO from the global South, which are often regarded as a testament for the institutionalisation of global governance (Dent 2003, 2004; Drechsel 2016), can also be conceptualised as capacity-building mechanisms. In the current Interregionalism literature, we find several examples that focus less on the EU and the international system but rather map the effects of Interregionalism for non-European counterparts. Plank (2017) shows the impact of AU–EU cooperation for the African security sector, Lammich (2022) highlights the regional dimension of China's African engagement and Doctor (2015) analyses the integrative effects of Interregionalism for Mercosur. Furthermore, Mattheis and Wunderlich (2017) abandon the solely Eurocentric perspective in their study of the effects of Interregionalism on regional actorness and also include ASEAN and Mercosur. All of these publications focus on singular aspects of Interregionalism without developing a comprehensive framework for the study of the effects of Interregionalism on non-EU organisations. Although the capacity-building approach requires certain preconditions, it represents an access point for the analysis of different forms of interregional cooperation. The framework is not a static construct and allows for the reduction or expansion of the functional spectrum. Diversification would be more relevant for South–South Interregionalism than for relations with the EU where again, identity building could be more heavily emphasised.

References

Adler, Emanuel; Barnett, Michael (1998) Security Communities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Aggarwal, Vinod; Fogarty, Edward (2004) 'Between Regionalism and Globalism: European Union Transregional and Inter-Regional Trade Strategies', in: Aggarwal, V.; Fogarty, E., ed. European Union Trade Strategies: Between Globalism and Regionalism, 1-69, London: Palgrave

Bachmann, Veit (2019) '(Trans) regionalism and South–South cooperation: AfrasiainsteadofEurafrique?', in: Third World Quarterly, 40: 4, 688-709

Baert, Francis; Scaramagli, Tiziana et al. (2014): Intersecting Interregionalism: Regions, Global Governance and the EU, Dordercht, NL: Springer

Bruszt, Laszlo; Palestini, Stefano (2016) 'Regional Development Governance', in: Börzel, T.; Risse, T. (eds): The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism, 374-404, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Buzan, Barry; Weaver, Ole (2003) Regions and Powers, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Chaban, Natalia; Elgström, Ole et al. (2006) 'The European Union as Others See it', in: European Foreign Affairs Review, No.11: 245-62.

Dent, Christopher (2004) 'The Asia-Europe Meeting and Interregionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility', in: Asian Survey, Vol. 44, No. 2, : 213-236

Doctor, Mahrukh. (2015) 'Interregionalism's impact on regional integration in developing countries: the case of Mercosur', in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol 22, No.7, pp. 967-984

Doidge, Matthew (2014) Interregionalism and the European Union: Conceptualising Group-to-Group Relations in: Baert F.; Scaramagli, T. et al. (eds) Intersecting Interregionalism: Regions, Global Governance and the EU, Dordrecht NL: Springer: 37-54

Doidge, Matthew (2011) The European Union and Interregionalism: Patterns of Engagement, Farnham: Ashgate

Doidge, Matthew (2008) 'Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism', in: Journal of European Integration, 29 (2): 229-248

Doidge, Matthew (2008a) Regional Organizations as actors in international relations: Interregionalism and asymmetric dialogues. In Rüland, J.; Schucher G. et.al (eds): Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks for Global Governance?, 32-54, New York: Routledge

Doidge, Matthew (2007) From Developmental regionalism to Developmental Interregionalism? The European Union Approach, NCRE Working Paper Nr. 07/01

Drechsel, Benjamin (2016) Interregionale Beziehungen und strategische Partnerschaften, Wiesbaden: Springer

Gilson, Julie (2002) Asia Meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting, Edward Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar

Godehardt, Nadine: Lembcke, Oliver W. (2010) Regionale Ordnungen in politischen Räumen. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie regionaler Ordnungen GIGA Working Papers No 124, available at http://www.gigahamburg.de/de/system/files/publications/wp124_godehardt-lembcke.pdf

Groenleer, Martijn. Van Schaik, Louise. G. (2007) United We Stand? The European Union's International Actorness in the Cases of the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol, in Journal of Common Market Studies, 45(5): 969-98.

Hamanaka, Shintaro (2021) Inter-regionalism in the Global South: comparison with extra-, cross-, trans-, and pan-regionalism, Cambridge Review of International Affairs

Hanau-Santini, Ruth; Lucarelli, Sonja et al. (2014) 'Interregionalism: A Security Study perspective', in Baert, F.; Scaramagli, T. et al. eds , Intersecting Interregionalism Regions, Global Governance and the EU, 71-88 Dordrecht: Springer

Hänggi, Heiner; Roloff, Ralf; Rüland, Jürgen (2006) Interregionalism and International Relations, A Stepping Stone to Global Governance?, New York: Routledge

Hänggi, Heiner (1999) 'ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad', in Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy 4(1): 56-80.

Hardacre, Allen (2009) The Rise and Fall of Interregionalism in EU External Relations, Dordrecht NL: Republic of Letters

He, Kai; Feng; Huiyun (2008) 'If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy Toward China', in Security Studies, 17(2): 363-395,

Hulse, Merran (2015) United We Stand, Divided We Fall: Actorness and Effectiveness of ECOWAS and SADC in Interregional Negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements, Dissertation, Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL

Hulse, Merran (2014) 'Actorness beyond the European Union: Comparing the International Trade Actorness of SADC and ECOWAS', in Journal of Common Market Studies, 52(3): 547-565.

Jervis, Robert (1982) 'Security Regimes', in International Organization, 36(2): 357-378

Jupille, Joseph; Caporaso, James; Checkel, Jeffery (2003) Integrating Institutions: Rationalism, Constructivism and the Study of the European Union, in Comparative Political Studies, 36(1): 7-40.

Jupille, Joseph; Caporaso, James (1998) 'States, Agency and Rules: The European Union in Global environment politics', in: Rhodes, C. ed The European Union in the World Community, 213-229 Boulder: Lynne Rienner

Kacowicz, Arie M.; Press-Barnathan, Galia (2016) 'Regional Security Governance', in Börzel, T.; Risse, T. (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism, 297-322 Oxford: Oxford University Press

Keohane, Robert and Nye, Joseph (1977) Power and Interdependence, Boston: Little, Brown and Company

Kingah, Stephen, Akong, Charles (2016) Is interregional AU- ASEAN diffusion in the South barren? In: Engel, U. Zinecker, H. et al.: The New Politics of Regionalism, London: Routledge 85-89

Lammich, Georg (2022): The Regional Dimension of Sino-African Development Cooperation, in: Ziltener, P.; Suter, C. (eds.) Past, Present and Future of African-Asian Relations - Realities of Africa-Asia Relations in the 21st Century, Zurich: LIT 89-119

Lammich, Georg. (2020). Funktionen von Interregionalismus

– Eine Globale Perspektive. Zeitschrift fur Politikwissenschaften 30: 123-140

Lopez-Lucia, Elisa; Mattheis, Frank. (2021). The Unintended Consequences of Interregionalism: Effects on Regional Actors, Societies and Structures London: Routledge

Manners, Ian 2002: Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, 40(2): 235-258

Mattheis, Frank; Godsäter, Andreas (2018) Interregionalism across the Atlantic Space, Wiesbaden Springer VS

Mattheis, Frank; Wunderlich, Uwe (2017) Regional actorness and interregional relations: ASEAN, the EU and Mercosur, in Journal of European Integration, 39(6): 723-738

Mattheis, Frank (2016) Towards bifurcated regionalism: The production of regional overlaps in Central Africa in Engel, U. Zinecker, H. The New Politics of Regionalism, London: Routledge 37-51

Lake, David; Morgan, Patrick. (1997) Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press

Muntschick, Johannes (2012) Theorising Regionalism and External Influence: A Situation structural Approach, Mainz Papers on International and European Politics, 2012/0, Mainz

Murau, Steffen and Spandler, Kilian (2016) 'EU, US and ASEAN Actorness in G20 Financial Policy-Making: Bridging the EU Studies – New Regionalism Divide', in Journal of Common Market Studies, 54(4): 928-943

Panagariya, Arvind (1998) The Regionalism Debate: An Overview, available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.413.4943&rep=rep1&type=pdf (01.09.2020)

Pirozzi, Nicole (2012) Strengthening the Africa-EU Partnership on Peace and Security: How to Engage African Regional Organizations and Civil Society, IAI Research Paper, Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura

Plank, Friedrich (2017) The effectiveness of interregional security cooperation: evaluating the joint engagement of the EU and the AU in response to the 2013 crisis in the Central African Republic, in: European Security, 26(4): 485-506

Plank, F. (2015) 'Mutual Capacity Building. Interregional Security Cooperation of the European Union', Graduate Conference "The EU in the World". Mainz, 9. January 2015.

Ribeiro-Hoffmann, Andrea (2016) 'Inter- and Transregionalism', in Börzel, T.; Risse, T. eds, The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism, 600-618, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Roloff, Ralf (2001) 'Europe, America and Asia between Globalization and regionalism: The Interregional Cooperation and the Economic Dimension of International Politics', Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh

Rüland, Jürgen (2014) 'Interregionalism and International Relations: Reanimating an Obsolescent Research Agenda?', In: Baert, F., Scaramagli, T. et al. eds, Intersecting Interregionalism Regions, Global Governance and the EU, 15-35, Wiesbaden: Springer

Rüland, Jürgen (2010) 'Balancers, multilateral utilities or regional identity builders? International relations and the study of interregionalism', in: Journal of European Public Policy, 17(8): 1271-1283.

Rüland, Jürgen (2008) Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks for Global Governance?, New York: Routledge

Rüland, J. (2002) 'Trans- and Interregionalism: remarks on the state of the art of a new research Agenda', National Europe Center Paper No.35

Rüland, J. (2001) ASEAN and the European Union: A Bumpy Interregional Relationship, ZEI Discussion Paper, C 95, Center for European Integration Studies, University of Bonn

Sjöstedt, Gunnar (1977) The External Role of the European Community, Westmead UK: Saxon House,

Söderbaum, Frederik; Stalgren, Patrick. (2010) 'The EU and the global South', London: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Stapel, Sören; Söderbaum Frederik (2017) Mapping and problematizing external funding to the AU and the RECs, GCGD conference paper, 6-7 November 2017

Valle, Marina V. (2008) Interregionalism: A Case Study of the European Union and Mercosur, GARNET Working Paper

No: 51/08

Vleuten van der, Anna; Ribeiro Hoffmann, Andrea (2013) 'The Politics of Interregionalism: Relations between International Regional Organizations', in: Reinalda, B. (eds) Routledge Handbook of International Organizations, 430-444, London: Routledge

Waltz, Kenneth (1979). Theory of International Politics, London: Addison-Wesley

Yeates, Nicola; Riggirozzi, Pia (2015) Global social regionalism: Regional Organisations as drivers of social policy change, Conference Paper International Sociological Association RC19 Annual Conference, University of Bath 26-28th August 2015