

REGIONAL ACTORSHIP AND REGIONAL AGENCY: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES
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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper raises the question how a region – such as Europe – can become an international actor. Regional agency is seen as a general phenomenon in the emerging regionalized world. Regional agency has come to life due to the transformation of the EU from being simply an instrument for economic cooperation to being a political actor, trying to shape external conditions. The general need for regional agency comes from the challenges of globalization as most states are unable to manage these problems on their own. But the ability must be created from inside through innovative institution building. Comparisons are also made with East Asia and Latinamerica in order to pinpoint the institutional preconditions for regional agency and to what extent these preconditions are fulfilled in various cases.

As a summary concept for a region's ability to influence the external world I use *regional actorship*. Normally a region is not associated with actorship, but rather seen as an "arena" or "level" of action. Regions are here, in contrast, understood as processes; they are not simply geographical objects but potential subjects, and thereby actors in the making (or un-making); This transformation from object to subject normally presupposes some kind of more or less formal organization. This institutional dimension is essential in region-building.

The concept of actorship is built around three interacting components which together constitute actorship: internal integration and identity formation, or *regionness*, international *presence* in terms of territorial and population size, economic strength, diplomacy, military power etcetera, and capacity to act purposively to shape outcomes in the external world, or *actorness*. The concept of actorship is not specifically related to the EU as a global actor but is meant to serve as an analytical framework in studying the transformation of any region from object to subject, that is with a certain actor capacity in its external relations.

It is often argued that the very meaning of 'Europe' is the non-existence of a clear borderline between internal and external, which naturally complicates the conceptualization of actorship in this particular case. The EU is trying to shape world order by means of inclusiveness, by treating the external as if it were internal, a political innovation which marks a significant departure from traditional realist power politics. This is referred to as civilian power – or soft or normative power in other conceptualizations. The unique feature of regional actorness is that it must be created by voluntary processes and therefore depends more on dialogue and consensus-building than on coercion.

2. AN ANATOMY OF REGIONAL ACTORSHIP

The concept of regional actorship is meant to include subjective, institutional, historical and structural dimensions in order to give a comprehensive view on regional agency as distinct from state action which operates according to a different logic, particularly in the case of a strong national power. Thus an adviser to the American president is reported (Timothy Garton Ash in the Guardian, December 28, 2006) to have said: 'We're an empire now and when we act we create our own reality'. The preconditions for regional actorship must be looked for both in internal developments within the region and in its external context. The relative cohesion of the regional actor shapes external action, which in turn impacts on regional identity and consciousness through the expectations and reactions of external actors vis-à-vis the region.

A multidimensional approach to the study of regionally based actorship is built around three interacting components:

- *regionness*: internal (objective) integration and (subjective) identity-formation,
- *international presence*: in terms of size, economic strength, military power etcetera,
- *actorness*: the capacity to act purposively to shape outcomes in the external world.

2.1 Regionness

Regionalism is usually seen as the ideology and project of region-building, while the concept of regionalisation is reserved for more spontaneous processes of region formation by different actors – state or non-state. When different processes of regionalisation intensify and converge within the same geographical area, the cohesion and thereby the distinctiveness of the region in the making increases. A regional actor takes shape. This process of regionalisation can be described in terms of levels of *regionness* (Hettne 1993, 2003; Hettne and Söderbaum 2003). The concept of regionness defines the position of a particular region in terms of its cohesion.

In general and abstract terms one can speak of five levels of regionness:

- (1) regional social space
- (2) regional social system
- (3) regional international society
- (4) regional community, and
- (5) regional institutionalised polity.

Regional social space is a geographic area, delimited by natural, physical barriers. The region is thus objectively rooted in territory. In social terms the region is organised by human inhabitants, at first in relatively isolated communities, and later constituting some kind of translocal relationship which can result from demographic change or changes in transport technology.

This increased density of contacts, implying more durable but unsettled relations, is what creates a *regional social system*. This precarious security situation, characterised by competing political units, has in history often led to an empire, or even more often to pendulum movements between a centralised and a more or less decentralised order. The centralised system achieves order by being coercive.

The region as an *international society* implies a set of rules that makes interstate relations more predictable (less anarchic), and thus more peaceful, or at least less violent. It can be either organised (de jure) or more spontaneous (de facto). In the case of a more institutionalised cooperation, the region is constituted by the members of the regional organisation.

The region as a *community* takes shape when a stable organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and the convergence of values, norms and behaviour throughout the region. Thus a transnational civil society emerges, characterised by social trust at the regional level.

Finally, region as an *institutionalised polity* has a more fixed and permanent structure of decision-making and therefore stronger acting capability, or actorship. Such a regional polity does not have to be characterised by the normal terminology used to describe political systems but can be *sui generis*, as in the case of Europe, or Europolity. No other regions in the world can at present be described in these terms.

The approach of seeing a region as process implies an evolution of deepening regionalism, not necessarily following the idealized, staged model presented above, which mainly serves a heuristic purpose. Since regionalism is a political project, created by human actors, it may move in different directions. It might indeed also fail, just as a nation-state project. Seen from this

perspective, decline would mean fragmentation and decreasing regionness as well as dilution of identity.

2.2 Presence

Europe as an external actor is more than the EU's foreign policy, and more even than the aggregate of the EU's policies across all areas of its activity. Simply by existing, and due to its relative weight (demographically, economically, militarily and ideologically), the Union has an impact on the rest of the world. Its footprints are seen everywhere. It is the largest donor in the world. The size of its economy is comparable to that of the US. It is also building a military capacity meant to be used outside the region. This provokes reactions and creates expectations from the outside. The concept of presence constitutes a bridge between endogenous and exogenous factors. A stronger presence implies a greater capacity to act but the actor must be subjectively conscious about its presence and prepared to make use of it. In the "near abroad" presence is particularly strong, and can develop into the outright absorption of new territory (enlargement). Presence is thus a complex and comprehensive material variable, depending on the size of the actor, the scope of its external activities, the relative importance of different issue areas, and the relative dependence of various regions upon the European market. A stronger presence means more repercussions and reactions and thereby a pressure to act. In the absence of such action, presence itself will diminish.

2.3 Actorness

Actorness implies a scope of action and room for manoeuvre, in some cases even a legal personality, however not common in the case of regions. In the EU, actorness is closely related to the controversial issue of "competencies" (who has the right to decide what?), ultimately determined by the Member States. Actorness follows from the strengthened presence of the regional unit in different contexts, as well as from the interaction between the actor and its external environment. Actorness is thus not only a simple function of regionness, but also an outcome of a dialectic process between endogenous and exogenous forces.

Bretherton and Vogler (2006: 30) identify four requirements for actorness with reference to the EU:

- (1) shared commitment to a set of overarching shared values and principles;
- (2) domestic legitimation of decision processes, and priorities, relating to external policy;
- (3) the ability to identify policy priorities and to formulate consistent and coherent policies; and
- (4) the availability of, and capacity to utilize, policy instruments (diplomacy, economic tools and military means).

Obviously, these requirements are fulfilled in different degrees in different EU Foreign Policy Relations (EFPRs) and in different foreign policy issue areas: from the "near abroad" to far away regions; and from the areas of trade—in which the EU is a strong actor—to security—where the competence given to the EU is contested and highly controversial. In other words, actorness is shifting over time, between issue areas and between foreign policy relations. This has to do with the peculiar nature of the EU as an actor and the complexity of its foreign policy machinery (EFPC). The most problematic requirement of actorness appears to be that of domestic legitimation, in view of the democratic deficit of the EU. This is posing a severe challenge to EU actorness particularly in the field of security.

The unique feature of regional actorness is that it must be created by voluntary processes and therefore depends more on dialogue and consensus building than on coercion. This mode of operating is the model Europe holds out as the preferred world order, since this is the way the new Europe (as organised by the EU) has developed in its more recent peaceful evolution. With

increased levels of actorness in different fields of action and different parts of the world, Europe will be able to influence the world order towards its own preferred model of civilian power: dialogue, respect for different interests within an interregional, pluralist framework based on democracy, social justice and equality, multilateralism and international law (Telò 2006).

3 THE SHAPING OF EUROPE AS A REGIONAL ACTOR

The historical perspective applied in this analysis is that the current world order is in transformation from a regional international system, which originated in Europe in the first part of the 17th century, and commonly is referred to as the Westphalian system. The time of its birth was a messy period, as one political order was in decay while a new order was about to emerge. The typical pre-modern political order, not only in Europe but in most parts of the world, was the more or less centralised Empire. However, the immediate pre-Westphalian experience of the Europeans was an extremely decentralised political order called “feudalism”—essentially a collapsed empire. How this came to be a uniquely European world order is discussed below in terms of the five levels of regionness.

3.1 Regional social space

In the regional social space that came to be called Europe, empire was a distant memory but also an impelling political ideal, when the continental polity became fragmented and was replaced by micro-units such as tribes, feudatories and emerging small kingdoms. The first European polity that showed some resemblance to classical empire was the territory under the control of Charlemagne in the ninth century—considered by many to be the core of “Europe”. Under the subsequent period of high medievalism, this space became a more consolidated cultural area, based on Latin Christendom as the integrative ideology. Peoples began to share a number of cultural practices, including a common experience (for the elites) of higher education, received from universities established throughout Europe. The pre-Westphalian, feudal order was a multilevel system with diffuse and constantly shifting authority structures without clear territorial borders and with no absolute authority. This system was not systematic but rather a bewildering mixture of often incompatible elements: the Christian Church represented by the Pope, an empire project with the purpose of unifying Europe under one emperor, feudal lords ruling over a subjugated peasantry, emerging kings who originated from the major feudal lords and who controlled pieces of territory, long distance trading networks that covered most of Europe and linked it with the outside world, local marketplaces, and an emerging bourgeoisie in semi-independent cities.

3.2 Regional social system

Frustrated attempts were made to transform this decentralised and periodically chaotic (“dark age”) polity into an empire, built on the ideal of the Roman Empire. After hundreds of years this contradictory structure exploded in the 17th century in an equally contradictory war (a war with many actors operating at different levels of the system and pursuing different goals). Ultimately, a new political order—Westphalia—was born. It resulted in the sovereign, territorial state, which in turn implied the end of local power, as well as of continental, all-European political and economic structures. All power was now monopolised by the state. This also meant that there was no overarching power, that is, a situation of “anarchy” as it was later termed by political theorists of the so-called realist school. The more successful nation-states competed not only in Europe but took their struggle to other continents. Europe thereby came to rule the world, not as a single actor but through its major nation-states dividing the world among them. The European regional system of states became a world system (Bull and Watson 1984). Governance functions were monopolised by the emerging kingdoms; a sort of compromise (absolutism) between centralisation (imperial order) and decentralisation (feudal order). There was therefore a certain loss of regionness at the continental level, as the new territorial states

became economically introverted (through mercantilism) and later trapped in an assertive ethnic identity (through nationalism).

Through growing internal social and economic relations, Europe had become a *regional social system*. In security terms this system was mostly violent, but complexity was reduced as “state” became identical with “territory”, and wars became territorial rather than religious (Heffernan 1998: 17). The number of actors was reduced and the modern political map took form. The state-building in Europe was violent, so people gradually learnt to conceive of their “own” state as protector, and the rest of the world as “anarchy”, a threat to their security. Europe was still a dangerous place—a violent regional security complex (Buzan and Waeber, 2003).

3.3 Regional international society

Throughout European modern history there have been several efforts to create geopolitical hegemony or dominion, provoking “anti-hegemonic” wars. These attempts at continental control have come from the dominant nations. Progress was for military reasons identified with economic development, which in the 19th century meant industrialisation. The state ultimately became responsible for what came to be called “development”, and the nation-state territory became the privileged space (container) in which development was to take place, security to be guaranteed and welfare to be created. The world order was a regional European system, stabilised by what became known as the European Concert. The “anarchy” thereby became a *regional international society* or an “anarchical society” (Bull 1977). The European Concert provided peace in the nineteenth century, but in spite of economic integration facilitated by “the long peace” the continent was plagued by increasing tensions towards the end of the century and by destructive wars in the first half of the twentieth century. A new Europe had to be built on new foundations.

3.4 Regional community

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a *regional community*: the EEC/EU. The “Europeanization” of Europe is a complex term if it is taken to mean the existence of a model Europe towards which real processes converge. No such master model ever existed. The process is more complex, combining forces from above and from below. Europeanization implies increasing sameness of the units in a system to the extent that the units experience a shared destiny, without necessarily giving up their individuality. A distinction can be made between regionalisation from below in the larger, “real” region, and harmonisation of the formal organised region, steered from above through a political/bureaucratic system (regionalism). However, the two processes are interlinked so a strict distinction cannot be maintained. It is typically the case in “the community method” that harmonisation attempts are premature, leading to backlashes.

The regionalisation process was constituted by different forms of *convergence* in terms of (i) political regimes, (ii) economic homogenisation, and (iii) in the way security arrangements were organised.

Regime convergence implies the reduction of differences within a particular political space, in this case an emerging region. The homogenisation of essential features of the political system can be seen as a precondition for joining the EU, and thus as a factor explaining enlargement. Normally a country Europeanises before being adopted as “European” and forming part of the EU, whereby regionalisation from below changes into harmonisation and coordination from above. The recent (post-1957) process of political homogenisation in Europe has gone through three phases: (i) in the south, the disappearance of military dictatorships in the mid-1970s; (ii) in the west, the more widespread self-assertion of the European Atlantic partners in the field of

security, beginning in the early 1980s; and (iii) in the east, the fall of the communist regimes in the late 1980s and the Soviet collapse in 1991.

The process of *economic homogenisation*, associated with uniform national adaptations to globalisation, has led to a state of liberal hegemony in Europe, although at the beginning the policy of state interventionism was widespread. The first economic regional institutions in post-war Western Europe were the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (1951) and the European Community (EC) (1957). Behind the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (1959) was, firstly, the traditional British national interest of avoiding involvement in any supranational European scheme, and, secondly, diverse national security interests of minor states expressed in different forms of neutrality. In Eastern Europe the context for regionalisation was also geopolitically determined. In the case of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) (1949) the national interests involved seem to have reflected the principle of “the less integration, the better”. In fact, most cooperation within the bloc was simply bilateral and the CMEA was a hindrance to rather than an instrument of regional integration. A more relaxed security situation signalled its dissolution. Much the same can be said of EFTA, which, as neutrality disappeared from the security agenda, gradually became a “waiting room” for the EU membership candidates.

Security is the third field of convergence and coordination. The two post-war military blocs, albeit with a group of neutrals in between, manifestly expressed Europe’s political subordination to the superpowers. It was an era of hegemonic regionalism, imposed from above and from the outside. From the viewpoint of economic organisation, the security imperative imposed a more or less corresponding cleavage pattern. In periods of détente it became evident that economic contacts tended to follow a logic of their own. In periods of high tension, economic relations, in contrast, had to adapt to the political imperatives built into the security arrangement. All this underlines the predominance of the security factor. In spite of this, the security factor was not expressed in institutional and policy terms until recently. Here, the break-up of Yugoslavia was the major learning process.

3.5 Regional institutionalised polity

Thus far, the EU is, in terms of regionness, the only example of a *regional institutionalised polity*—at present hovering between intergovernmentalism and supranational governance—but with an uncertain future, due to a new wave of euroscepticism and the decreased coherence and consistency following the inflow of new members. The controversies have been in the fields of economic policy and security. As the EU started to become an institutionalised polity in the 1990s the economic foundation became more liberal than earlier due to domestic political changes in the Member States. The economic regionalisation of Europe arising out of the intensification of the internal market project has thus so far been fully consistent with market-led economic globalisation. Indeed both processes have been founded on the same neo-liberal paradigm. The economic convergences contributing to increasing regionness occurred in a context of liberalisation, deregulation and orthodox anti-inflationary policies, which were built into the constitutional future of Europe, as spelled out in the Maastricht Treaty (1991).

In the subsequent years the European Monetary Union (EMU) became the main route to integration. The convergence criteria of the EMU illustrate a process of regionalisation (or regionalism) directed from above (harmonisation) and in accordance with a strict schedule, although occasionally and selectively generous in its application due to public resistance to financial orthodoxy. Clearly, it is difficult to distinguish the politics from the economics of monetary integration. More recently the problems of the European Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) underlined the dangers of political divergence within a monetary bloc, raising doubts about the viability of the EMU. With a single currency, fiscal indiscipline in one state clearly has implications for others. We may, however, also face a more complicated situation in which

there is genuine disagreement about the correct economic policy. Regime convergence has preceded the formal integration process, since only democratic, market-oriented polities can merge with the European polity. The adaptation to a political order, compatible with European values, has been and to some extent continues to be a major source of change in Greater Europe. This process is far from finished. Former “Eastern Europe” has been successfully integrated on the basis of liberalism, but in the Balkans the EU has faced a major security crisis with the current problems in Kosovo constituting the last phase.

The fundamental problem is that the EU institutions were originally designed around a limited number of countries, in a different age and with a different purpose. The European project grew out of a Cold War context and a transatlantic alliance, and was intended to create a coherent and homogeneous capitalist core out of the competing great powers of Europe. The process of deepening (institution-building) is now lagging far behind enlargement, threatening all dimensions of actorship, ultimately dependent on how “Europe” is subjectively conceived by its inhabitants, more and more attracted by the politics of identity.

4 THE QUALITY OF ACTORSHIP

A number of societal convergences within a region create a more coherent basis for external action, but by themselves they do not constitute effective actorship. A supranational structure of some sort is necessary in order to avoid divisions and inconsistencies among member countries. Furthermore, the various institutions must constitute a consistent and coherent framework rather than just adding one institution to another in an *ad hoc* manner. Europe, as organised by the EU, is certainly the most institutionalised regional actor of all, but its institutions do not form one consistent whole but rather a patchwork. This chapter describes the intricate machinery through which actorship, or the will to exercise influence in the external world, is being institutionalised, what is here referred to as the EU Foreign Policy Complex (EFPC) and how this complex operates in its various EU Foreign Policy Relations (EFPRs).

4.1 EU’s Foreign Policy Complex

The foreign policy machinery of the EU is historically emerging rather than consciously designed. Therefore it may be more appropriate to refer to it as the EU’s Foreign Policy Complex (EFPC).

The complexity of the EFPC derives from many factors:

- (1) two political levels (the individual nation-states and the EU level);
- (2) the pillar system, and the different competencies with regard to where decisions are taken;
- (3) the multiplicity of common institutions and policy instruments; and
- (4) the multitude of foreign policy objectives.

Firstly, there are at least two political levels: the level of the individual nation-states (which means 27 foreign ministries), insisting on their right to pursue their own foreign policies; and the union level, divided between the Community—where the Commission is the driver—and the Council—where the governments of the Member States can take collective decisions if they so wish. Thus the Council also reflects the interests of the Member States, but, to the extent that qualified majority voting takes place and there is a mobilisation behind important concerns, it will in practice constitute a level of its own above the Member States. Much theorising is devoted to the nature of these levels and their interrelations in different policy areas.

Secondly, the EFPC contains three distinct policy clusters characterised by different responsibilities with regard to where decisions are taken—the so-called “pillars” of trade and economic cooperation, security and defence, and justice and home affairs. Through their external implications (presence) each is important for the EU as a global actor. The Treaty of Rome in 1957 was above all concerned with the international trade regime, and also provided for a customs union, which was subsequently established in 1968. This “first pillar” made the

EC a global actor in trade negotiations, with presence and actorness mutually supporting each other. The “second pillar” is understood to encompass cooperation among the Member States in the foreign policy and security fields. It is mildly paradoxical that this cooperation is extremely sensitive and controversial, at the same time as the entire integration project is officially described as a historical peace project. Thus, security is described as the core of the EU project, but it seems instead to be an indirect effect of cooperation, which should not be seen in explicitly direct terms. The “third pillar”—cooperation in justice and internal affairs—commenced in the 1970s, during a period of heightened terrorism throughout Europe. Due to sensitivities about national security this cooperation took place discreetly, without formal binding agreements (Smith 2003: 31, 47ff). The Amsterdam Treaty moved many items to the first (supranational) pillar, creating a contradiction between effectiveness and legitimacy. Thus, this is an area of cross-pillar operation. In fact a large number of issues would be more effectively handled by more such cross-pillar operation, or a complete abandoning of the “pillar” approach—which was in fact a key purpose of the proposed EU constitution. Its failure has been a main setback for the pursuit of coherence and consistency, affecting the various components of actorship.

As a third component of the EFPC, there are several institutions with different mandates and sometimes differing views: the European Council, the Council (different constellations of national ministers), the Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. Numerous special agencies and policy instruments are operating in various issue areas, depending on which pillar is activated. Most effective instruments are located within pillar one, where the EU presence is strongly manifested, but need to be applied in pillars two and three in order to give them more strength. To do so is often complicated because of the bureaucratic cultures and diverging interests that have developed in different institutions, creating what is called ‘bureaucratic politics’.

Fourth, various objectives are pursued within the EFPC; for instance regional cooperation, human rights, democracy and good governance, conflict prevention, sustainable development, security and fighting international crime (Smith 2003). Ultimately, the greater objective of the EFPC is multilateral global governance and a regionalised world order, but this is only achievable to the extent that the objectives form a consistent whole.

All these objectives are thus subject to the criteria of *coherence* and *consistency*. Coordination to satisfy these criteria takes place both vertically (between Member States and the Union), and horizontally between the Member States and between the pillars and prioritised objectives. The consistency/coherence imperative drives the EFPC towards more effective coordination, which to some extent implies supranational centralisation. Thus with time the EFPC may lose some of its complexity. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty would mean a step forward but not solve all problems. However, it should be recognised that the EFPC itself changes over time, due to a number of endogenous and exogenous factors: organisational changes, a growing number of members with shifting interests and norms, and responses to external expectations and challenges.

It should also be kept in mind that the institutional development towards greater coherence and consistency of the EU takes place in the context of crises and challenges, such as the Balkan crisis, affecting the security area with links to economic cooperation, and the current Burma crisis, strengthening the links between humanitarian aid and human rights in the field of global development.

4.2 EU’s Foreign Policy Relations

EU’s foreign policy relations (EFPRs) take four main forms: *enlargement* (towards the core area of Europe), *stabilisation* (in “the neighbourhood”), *bilateralism* (towards great and strong powers), and *interregionalism* (towards world regions and regional organisations). The four

relationships in turn lead to four types of counterparts: prospective members, neighbours, great powers, and more far away regions, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America. Obviously the borderlines between these categories are uncertain and subject to change.

The EU's foreign policy relations (EFPRs) take four main forms:

1. Enlargement towards prospective members
2. Stabilisation towards neighbours
3. Bilateralism towards great and strong powers
4. Interregionalism towards other regions and regional organisations.

Enlargement policy covers acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania were the latest to join), candidate countries (Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey) and potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia). The enlargements have concerned either well-integrated European countries, whose entries were, for various reasons, delayed, or less developed and politically turbulent countries, integrated into the European mainstream mainly for security reasons.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has the aim of stabilising the EU's neighbourhood. A crucial component is its commitment to promote democratisation and human rights in combination with the principles of good governance, rule of law, market economy and sustainable development. There are no obvious criteria indicating what is to be regarded as non-Europe, other than geographical distance, which also tends to become relative. The boundary is ultimately politically determined. In the post-Soviet area—the European part, the Caucasus and Central Asia—the EU presence is weak, and there is little leverage for influence (Dannreuther 2004). Russia has claimed the role as stabiliser in this area but lacks a coherent security policy, except for the simple policy of control, with some neo-imperialist overtones. The Barcelona process is a strategy of cooperation between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours, where peace is the first priority, in accordance with the basic concern for stability. The Mediterranean “region” does not exist in a formal sense, but is rather a pure social construction shaped by the EU's own security concerns.

The EU has developed a series of *bilateral* relationships with United States, Russia, Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, India and South Africa. In some cases this completes, and in other cases replaces, genuine region-to-region links. Among the bilateral partners the US is the most powerful. In fact the challenges and problems posed by its military superiority cannot be balanced, and its imperial policy cannot be influenced, according to the old realist recipe of the balance of power politics. What remains is what has been called “soft balancing”, which can be seen as a form of civil power. In spite of a tremendous degree of contact on the level of civil society, the formal interregional transatlantic links (EU–NAFTA) are institutionally weak or non-existent (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2006). The relations between the EU and Russia are similar to those between the EU and the USA, in the sense that Russia also prefers bilateralism, and takes a realist, power-oriented approach.

During the last decade, *interregional* cooperation in a more institutionalised form has become an increasingly important component of the EU's FPRs. However, it is a perception strongly linked to the European Commission and barely exists at the level of the Member States. The regionalist policy is realised through a large number of interregional arrangements, particularly those with far away counterparts in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where EU interests often clash with those of the US. That the EU constitutes the hub of these interregional arrangements is in full accordance with its regionalist ideology, encompassing not only trade and foreign investment but also political dialogue and cultural relations between the regions. The EU's ambition is also to formalise the relations as being between regional bodies and regions (“pure” interregionalism) rather than the more diffuse informal, transregional or bilateral contacts. However, for pragmatic reasons, interregional relations take on a bewildering variety of forms.

There is no reason why the various transregional and interregional relations among different actors should take a single form, hence the frustrating attempts at making clear and unambiguous definitions. The conceptualisations of interregionalism as more or less “pure” suggest that there are normal and abnormal situations. It is the variety of arrangements that will characterise global governance—not the predominance of one type, such as formal or “pure” interregionalism. The concentration of interregional relations to the Triad is natural in view of the thickness of economic as well as other relations. This does not imply that there is no need for interregional cooperation in other regional contexts. Rather there has until now been a weaker development of such needs and the ability to deal with them.

5. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER REGIONS

As we relate the case of Europe to various experiences of regionalism throughout the world there are at least three distinctions to be made: EU as the *paradigm* of regionalism, showing regionalization to be a systemic tendency in the world system; EU as a *model* for regionalism to be imitated in other geographical areas; and the empirical *interregional* relationship between Europe and various world regions. These distinctions are analytically separable but nevertheless impossible to keep apart completely in real world conditions. If external factors motivate regional integration anywhere, the EU experience will automatically turn up as an obvious example to consider, and, furthermore, this is strongly encouraged by the EU foreign policy of interregionalism.

There are different sorts of empirical relations (EFPRs) between Europe and other regions. A typology was already suggested above: enlargement, stabilization, bilateralism, and interregionalism. The most important type of relationship with far away regions is interregionalism, but there are also bilateral links with regional great powers (Brazil, Japan, China) and more or less regular summits on the continental level (EU – Latin America meeting, Europe-Asia meeting, EU-Africa meeting).

That the EU is seen as a model is undeniable but the actual role it plays differs from one case to another, it may even serve as a negative model. However, to the extent that the model is perceived as positive, as seems to be the case in most of Africa, Southeast Asia and the Southern Cone of Latin America, the EU will exercise influence without having to impose its values.

The idea of EU as a paradigm that other regions follow, not through imitation but rather as a general tendency, is more controversial, but should not be dismissed altogether if we believe in some sort of world system logic. It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that regions respond in similar ways to similar responses, for instance intrusions from stronger powers affecting internal cohesion. Thus the presence of the US plays a major role in Latin America in creating obstacles but also incentives for regionalism.

Here we discuss the cases of East- and Southeast Asia and Latin America, focusing on regionalization towards regional cohesion and institution-building, experiences of political cooperation among member states and interregionalism between the EU and the selected regions.

5. 1. The question of cohesion

Regionalism in East Asia and Southeast Asia is often described as *de facto* regionalism, whereas regionalization in Europe is supposed to take place *de jure*. This contrast in institutionalization may be due to differences in political culture, but an alternative explanation could lie in the fact that the inter-state relations in East Asia are rather tense and unsettled, as realistically should be expected in a security complex with few institutionalized inter-state arrangements, thus making it into something less than an ‘anarchical society’. To this unsettled contemporary situation comes a historical legacy of interstate violence and problems of distrust

not yet resolved. East Asia proper is economically dynamic but weak in terms of transnational political structures and regional identity. The future of this region is either rather bleak - in case the potential conflicts were translated into war - or very bright - if the degree of interdependence were to prove to be a point of convergence of interests, where every state gets a stake in stable peace. There are nevertheless indications that the level of regionness is on the increase, both in terms of economic convergence and identity. The role of China is crucial here. There is a dramatic change in this classical empire from aloofness and introvertedness to a dynamic, optimistic constructive curiosity towards the outside world, as shown in the preparations for the Olympic Games.

The regionalization process in Europe, increasing regionness, was discussed above in terms of three convergencies leading to increased coherence: regime convergence, economic homogenization and security relations. In Southeast Asia regime convergence and economic policy convergence are obvious by the fact that former communist Indochina was integrated in ASEAN. Southeast Asia has sometimes been described as 'security community', Burma being the odd man in the grouping. ASEAN has thus meant significant security cooperation, which has tended to involve also the East Asian region. The ASEM process has meant a more cooperative atmosphere in the larger region: Asean Plus Three or APT (the 'three' being Japan, China and South Korea).

An ASEAN charter was agreed in 2007 at the 40th anniversary of the organization and in the shadow of the Burma crisis. It was therefore somewhat diluted compared to the original ambitions, a codification of existing norms, not dissimilar to what happened to the European constitution. Nevertheless the charter created a legal foundation for the organization and an ASEAN Summit, constituted by the region's heads of state, to meet twice a year.

For an outsider the *Latin American* continent may appear as rather homogeneous, but the internal divisions and cleavages are nevertheless substantial. Regional cooperation was therefore late in coming and has faced many setbacks (Heine, 1999). Latin America has strong Iberian roots due to its long colonial heritage. The Iberian cultural imposition was opposed by a multitude of indigenous cultures, by oppression and resistance shaped into an 'Indian world'. Neither of these two cultures were compatible with the 19th century fragmentation into nation-states, which took shape as elite projects run by important Ladino families – in contradistinction to the 'Bolívar – project'.

There are nevertheless strong symbols recognizable and relevant throughout the region, a region now commonly referred to as the Americas, including the US and Canada with Mexico (and legal and illegal immigrants – 'Hispanics') as the Latin link. As mentioned above local cultural traditions play a role in identity formation but identity is continuously transformed, as shown by Mexico's joining NAFTA and leaving 'the third world'.

In terms of regime convergence there has recently been an overall trend towards democracy (whereas there was a contrary trend in the 1970s). In some countries this has gone together with a mobilization and strengthening of indigenous groups, in turn leading to populist/socialist positions frightening both Ladino-dominated countries (Argentina) and Ladino elites in the countries concerned (Bolivia for instance). However, centrist governments now predominate and it would not be wrong to speak of a longterm regime convergence throughout the continent. Socialism has recently (in Venezuela and Ecuador) been referred to as '21st century socialism', supposed to be democratic rather than revolutionary.

In economic life there has also been convergencies, though also in this case in different directions at different points in time. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, which severely damaged the colonial and post-colonial primary goods export economy, there was born in Latin America a development model based on 'import-substitution-industrialization', which became generally applied and popularized by ECLAC. This structuralist strategy was successfully

applied from the late 1940s to the 1970s. According to the model the strategy should be combined with regional integration in order to create the biggest possible Latin American market, but in practice the strategy was carried out on the national level and therefore soon faced obstacles not possible to break through (Sunkel, 2008). Instead globalization and opening up of the economies became the general answer after a turbulent 1970s with revolutions and military dictatorships. A powerful process of economic convergence towards industrialization and economic modernization at least in the larger countries had been terminated. The importance of the market and a more cautionary approach to state-intervention has since then been more generally acknowledged by most regimes, although 'neoliberalismo' generally has got a bad reputation after the unsuccessful orthodox experiments in free trade, stable currencies, non-intervention in the economy of the 80s and 90s. However, few countries today believe in protectionism and strong interventionism, although such signals have not disappeared completely.

The security situation as regards interstate relations is with a few exceptions quite relaxed, and has never been a big problem in Latin America. This cannot be said about the domestic condition in a number of countries particularly in Central America and the Andean area.

5.2 The experiences of cooperation and conflict

So far we have discussed the inherent tendencies and potential towards regional cohesion in larger East Asia and Latin America. What are the real experiences of cooperation and conflict? The Asian Financial Crisis 1997-98 and the war against terrorism after 2001 exemplify regional and global events having a strong impact promoting cooperation. The financial crisis underlined the interdependence within the larger region of East Asia and made the Asian countries frustrated over the US (but also the EU) attitude. Of particular interest here is the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) based, on bilateral currency swaps. Before this there was little discussion about regional approaches to the management of financial stability. In June 2008 finance ministers from the APT further agreed to create a pool of 80 billion dollars for the protection of regional currencies. This replaced the CMI arrangement and was a step towards a regional equivalent to the IMF. This initiative, albeit largely compatible with liberal globalization, may prove to be a breakthrough for regional cooperation in larger East Asia (APT) not only in this field, but more generally. However, the two Burma crises (the political uprising and the cyclone catastrophe) revealed the lack of actorship in other areas.

With regard to cultural legacy, language for instance, there should be a good basis for Latin American integration, but often political and ideological differences have prevented genuine and longterm cooperation. Attempts at cooperation by the governments have not been lacking. There are quite a few regional organizations pursuing the project of building regionalism from above, not very successful though. The most ambitious have been MERCOSUR and (at some stage at least) AC. As far as regional agency is concerned there is nothing comparable to the EU. NAFTA for instance is primarily a trading block and lacks an external dimension. The other regional organizations certainly have more comprehensive regional agendas but they are rather ad hoc. US hegemony makes it hard to pursue them. There is also a problematic lack of supragovernmental institutions able to manage inter-state conflicts, even in Mercosur. There are for instance complaints about protectionist praxis violating the treaty. There are unresolved bilateral problems such as the protests from Argentine environmentalists against the building of a pulp mill close to Argentine territory just across the Uruguay river. On the other hand Argentina has been criticized by the other member states for depreciating its currency and exporting its own problems. Mercosur is now bent on widening rather than deepening (Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela), which increases presence but decreases regionness and actorship. The entry of Venezuela is hampered by opposition due to its lack of commitment to liberalization and free trade, as well as the extravagant political behaviour of Hugo Chavez. On the other hand a consensus could be built on the general sympathy for redistributive interventionism, being part of the Latin American (as well as European) political legacy.

In the end of 2007 the presidents of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay and Venezuela, along with a representative from Uruguay, gathered in Buenos Aires and signed the founding charter of the Banco del Sur, or Bank of the South. This can be compared to the Chiang Mai initiative. Later, twelve Latin American countries met in Rio and founded the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The treaty was signed on Friday, 23rd May 2008. Thus Mercosur and the Andean Community (AU) will ultimately merge and probably turn to the EU for cooperation and partnership. The Union is modelled on the EU, and there is talk of financial cooperation and a common currency. The South American Union has a clear bias against the US, which makes it hard for Colombia to join. Colombia remains outside the military cooperation envisaged. In view of the problems experienced by Mercosur and the Andean Union, the building of the new organization for regional cooperation will not be easy. The tensions within these two organizations are multiplied in the UNASUR.

5.3 Interregional structures

”Triadization”, the formation of a tripolar world, is to many observers what globalisation really is about. The level of institutionalization differs a lot even in the core regions, namely Europe, North America and East Asia. The three make up a large part of the world economy. They organize for the sake of better being able to control and to get access to the rest of the world, i.e. the world outside their own region. One important means of control is to achieve ideological hegemony. The three core areas constituting the Triad have different traditions in this respect. It has become common to speak of three regional forms of capitalism: the unregulated capitalism of North America, the administered capitalism of East Asia, and the social capitalism of Europe. Probably, the two latter are better prepared to meet the growing demand for global development, at least as far as redistributive policies (public goods) are concerned.

EU relations with Asia are recent. The Asia strategy from 1994 was a late reaction to the rise of Asia. Similarly the ASEM initiative came from the Asian side as a consequence of the economic rise of post-Maastricht Europe. Thus there was a changing perspective of geopolitics involved. There are several competing regionalisms in the larger region, i.e. Southeast Asia and East Asia (often referred to as East Asia). There are also expressions of a more exclusivist Asian regionalism within this larger region. The Malaysian prime minister Mahathir once proposed an East Asian Economic Caucus. This was meant to be a sort of Asian response to the threat of European and North American ‘fortresses’.

In the Triad (that is the US, Europe and East Asia) there are two organizations, APEC and ASEM, the first dominated by the US, the second being an EU – East Asia institutionalized summit process in which East Asia is being organized as APT, a new region in the making. ASEM is by both partners seen as a welcome opportunity to discuss controversial issues in an informal but nevertheless slightly institutionalized context. Thus, declarations at one summit may create the basis for subsequent action in a way that reminds about ‘the community method’ in Europe. The uniqueness of ASEM is that it is one of the few international organisations of political importance where the USA is not a member, which is bound to be divisive in both camps, where there are some states which value their relations with the USA more, should it come to a conflict of interest. It should also be noted that one of the reasons for ASEM was that the EU was denied association status to APEC. ASEM is on paper a comprehensive, multidimensional type of collaboration in spite of limited formalization (the EU-ASEAN relationship constitutes the backbone). Much of this comprehensiveness is still unfulfilled and among the three pillars, economic, political and cultural relations, the economic, trade and investment, has been in focus. It has been called ‘hybrid transregionalism’ since it combines transregionalism and interregionalism. However, as Julie Gilson puts it ‘ASEM provides a mechanism for institutionalizing not only a partnership, but also the partner *per se*’. The point here is that by participating in an interregional process, a regional identity is created. Thus ASEAN Plus Three (APT) is emerging as a new regional actor in the wake of crises in ASEAN and APEC.

Between the EU, the US and Latin America there is also a triangular relationship that can be compared with the Triad, in that there is a competitive relationship between the US and the EU vis-vis the third part (LA and EA). In the Atlantic triangle the US – LAC relations are organized in OAS, whereas the EU – LAC relations are constituted in a summit process (comparable to ASEM) with meetings in Rio (1999), Madrid (2002), Guadalajara (2004), and Vienna (2006) (Crawley, 2006). The EU — Mercosur relationship is an example of formal or ‘pure’ interregionalism, since there exists an agreement between two regional organizations (the EU-Mercosur Interregional Framework Co-operation Agreement – EMIFCA, 1995), which also is built on three pillars of which the first includes a political dialogue, the second a substantive financial support to Mercosur’s institutional development and the third economic and commercial cooperation.

The links between the EU and Latin America are growing closer, as the US seems to have lost interest in its own backyard, or perhaps is to preoccupied with other areas. As Mercosur with the entry of Venezuela moves further towards an anti-US stand, the US tries to create divisions within the organization, for instance by making a bilateral agreement with Chile and, more recently, friendly gestures to Paraguay and Uruguay. Colombia has for some time been subject to a ‘special programme’ fighting the drugs trade. US under the leadership of the Democrats is becoming lukewarm about FTAs. A continental free trade area is thus not an immediate or even long term possibility. Rather the Latin American continent will ultimately unite, however difficult this may seem at the moment.

6. CONCLUSIONS: ACTORSHIP, INTERREGIONALISM AND WORLD ORDER

The states-system (Westphalia) was highly institutionalized (within but ultimately also between states). A transition to post-Westphalia (still something of a utopia) needs a lot of institutional innovation in the vacuum created by the globalized condition. In conclusion, there are both differences and similarities in the processes of regionalization and regional agency in the three regions. All of them need regional cooperation to manage internal crises and external challenges inherent in globalization and to increase their cohesion. In Europe regionness has reached the level of regional institutionalized polity, but there are no guarantees that this degree of cohesion can be sustained. In East Asia the dynamics of regionalization is stronger than the political preparedness to engage in a formal regional project (regionalism). In Latin America there are deep cleavages which do not exist in Europe (Bolivia is an example), and the political divisions between states (for instance Colombia and Venezuela) are also becoming stronger.

The concept of actorship is thus not specifically related to the EU as a global actor but meant to serve as an analytical framework in studying the transformation of any region from being an object to becoming a subject, that is with a certain actor capacity in its external relations. It is also relevant in order to understand the preconditions for interregionalism. For two regions to establish a functioning interregional relationship it is essential that both regions have achieved a certain degree of actorship, that is internal cohesion, external presence and organized actorness. Otherwise there will merely be a subject-object relationship. Interregionalism can thus be described as a relationship between actors more or less well-provided with the various components of actorship. These components can compensate for each others’ weaknesses. A weak presence can for instance be compensated for by stronger internal cohesion or effectively organized actorness.

The policy of interregionalism is pursued energetically by the EU, whereas other regions, even if they are organized as regions, have little say. This situation creates an asymmetrical relationship in the case of weak regions such as the six EPA regions replacing the ACP organization. Even the ACP countries, a ‘region’ completely constructed by the EU, have however been able to exercise some leverage in negotiations with the EU which testifies to the importance of institutionalization. On the other hand a strong presence does not necessarily lead

to regional actorship. North America as organized in NAFTA for instance is strong in terms of presence but weak in terms of regionness and actorship. In fact NAFTA cannot be considered a regional actor since it is lacking an external dimension. Other regions completely lack actorship, for instance the Mediterranean, which is a construction by the EU Neighbourhood Policy, and Central Asia, which can be described as a 'pre-region'.

In this paper the comparative focus has been on larger East Asia and Latin America. The Southeast Asia region as organized by ASEAN, and increasingly East Asia organized in ASEAN Plus Three (APT), as well as the Southern Cone of Latin America organized in Mercosur are increasing their actorship. Latin America forms part of the larger region of the Americas in which the hegemony of the US represents a major obstacle for regional cooperation, which on the whole is unacceptable to the US, preferring bilateral diplomacy or a very loose regionalism (OAS, APEC) to comprehensive regional cooperation. As some kind of response South America (Central America is still outside) is being organized in UNASUR. In both cases the relevant region is growing in order to adequately respond to global challenges. Thus regions are not built in stone.

Interregional arrangements are without doubt feeble and contradictory, but they nevertheless signify an interest in and a growing need for interregionalism in a more viable form. A regionalized world order derived from still embryonic, transregional formations would challenge the homogenizing tendency of contemporary globalisation by working for a multipolar or rather multicentric world order, with selfcentred but not autarchic regions, each rooted in historical civilizations.

What are the preconditions for a world order based on interregionalism? First of all, the region as a whole is dependent on good intraregional security relations and would therefore be forced to intervene in cases of break-down of law and order. The EU has felt this pressure but with the exception of Macedonia and now Kosovo, where the outcome is unknown, it has so far failed to manage the crises on its own. A change will probably come. ASEAN, cautious about intervening in the internal affairs of member states, took an active part in solving the Cambodian crisis and led the international assistance to Burma after the cyclone. In Latin America there has been no security interventions but warnings from the larger community when interstate relations got tense (Colombia and Ecuador).

Secondly, there has to be a certain standard in terms of governance, democracy and human rights for the region to be an attractive global partner. This is now formally part of all three regions' charters. The EU is supposed to warn members moving towards political decay and closely watch human rights performance in candidate countries. The existence of NAFTA has had an impact upon the way that Mexico dealt with internal rebellion, as also, presumably, for the development of a more democratic political culture. Mercosur (i.e. the other three members) has criticized Paraguay for undemocratic tendencies. At least some ASEAN members (those with more stable domestic situations) are increasingly embarrassed by what happens in Burma and have become more vocal in their criticism.

Finally, similar normative principles apply between regions. The interregional arrangements between the EU and other regions also stress to human rights, democracy and conflict prevention. Being an outflow of the new regionalism, these arrangements are (in principle) voluntary and fundamentally cooperative, in contrast to a world order based on coercive hegemony or dominance. The emerging regions should, furthermore, coexist in a normative universe of converging values, created through processes of intercivilizational dialogue and intersubjective understanding. This cosmopolitan utopia differs from the 'unilateralist movement' and 'the war against terrorism', which at present mark world politics. It must be kept in mind that, in being based on dialogue and the search for intersubjectivity, the strategy of interregionalism is equally concerned with the quality of international relations and their effectiveness. This is what I refer to as the 'global development' dimension of world order.

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