"With a Little Help From My Friends":
How Regional Organizations in Africa Sustain
Clientelism, Corruption and Discrimination

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Abstract

This paper explains how regional organizations in Africa sustain clientelism, corruption and discrimination. The study deals with the agencies of political leaders and government officials within some of the main regional organisations in Africa, particularly AU, SADC, ECOWAS, EAC and COMESA. According to one influential strand of research in the field, regional organizations play important roles in the transition and consolidation of democracy. This scholarship claims that domestic elites can, "with a little help from their friends in regional organizations", advance the cause of democracy. This paper turns such argument on its head, instead showing how political leaders and state representatives are able to manipulate regional organizations in order to further their narrow political and economic regime interests and self-interests. We emphasise two main strategies: *Regime-boosting*, which implies a vivid game of rhetorical and symbolic regionalism, but without implementation. *Shadow regionalism* occurs behind a façade of formal regionalism and formal diplomacy. It is driven by particular officials in the state bureaucracy, who come together with illegal businesspeople in order to either bolster patronage networks and weaken political challengers, or serve as instruments for self-enrichment through informal market activities.

Introduction

According to conventional wisdom regionalism in Africa is primitive, weak or simply a 'failure'. This article shows that this interpretation can be misleading in the sense that certain forms of regionalism in Africa are both sophisticated and 'successful' — at least for those actors controlling the strategies, first and foremost the ruling political elites and 'the plunderers'.

The failure to fully understand the multifaceted nature of regionalism in Africa and why it is actually rather successful for those actors in control is related to at least three weaknesses in the field. These are, firstly, the overwhelming dominance of mainstream theories of regionalism, such as neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism and regional economic integration. These theories are based on a specific mode of knowledge production and privilege certain research questions at the expense of others. This makes them concerned with a rather narrow focus on formal and state-centric regional projects (political science) or the analysis of official trade flows within comparative static frameworks (economics) with a view that regionalism should follow the same route as in Europe. The second limitation of mainstream debates is their empirical focus on Europe and more recently the Americas and Asia-Pacific, which results in a general ignorance of regionalism in Africa, at least the two forms of regionalism outlined in this article. The third weakness is that the bulk of research that actually exists on regionalism in Africa is simply a reflection of the mainstream view or more or less delinked from rigorous theoretical argument. As two leading scholars point out, the political analysis of regionalism in Africa is largely underdeveloped, and it is either overly concerned with 'synoptic overviews of inter-state policy frameworks'[1] or 'cataloguing economic relationships'.[2]

This article outlines two forms of regionalism in Africa that are largely overlooked in current debates on regionalism in Africa, especially in the mainstream literature.[3] The two closely related forms of regionalism emphasised in this article are referred to as 'regime-boosting' and 'shadow regionalism' respectively. It is suggested that certain regionalizing actors are perfectly aware of the type of regionalism they are producing. It is a well-calculated regionalizing strategy, which is highly 'successful' for themselves but deeply detrimental to others. The majority of the empirical illustrations are taken from the Southern African context, but it is suggested that the same logic prevails in other parts of Africa.

In order to detect these two forms of regionalism, it is necessary to challenge the rationalist and largely 'positivist' theoretical frameworks in the field, concerned as they are with formal and inter-state policy frameworks. As a response this article makes a call for a critical and reflectivist theoretical framework, which is more sensitive to the particular historical context, which goes beyond formal regionalism and also considers informal regionalism, which takes into account that a variety of state as well as non-state actors can be involved in regionalism.

The article is structured as follows. The next section describes the limits of mainstream theories of regionalism. The second section argues that the new regionalism approach (NRA) is a well-suited framework for understanding complex and multidimensional regionalism. However, also the NRA needs further theorization of the state and ruling political elites,

which is added to the framework. Thereafter, in the following two sections, 'regime-boosting' and 'shadow regionalism' are discussed in detail. The first is formal, and emphasizes how ruling regimes use regionalism as an instrument in order to boost the absolute sovereignty and the image of their weak states. The second is an informal mode of regionalism, which explains how state representatives and certain business actors hide behind formal regionalism in order to engage in informal and illegal market activities and even 'plunder'. A conclusion draws the threads together and also considers avenues for further research.

The limits of mainstream schools of regionalism

Mainstream and rationalist schools of regionalism — neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism and regional economic integration — have had a profound impact on the research field. There is an impressive research output connected to these schools, and there is no doubt about the fact that they have contributed to a better understanding of regionalism and regionalist projects, both in the past as well as in today's regionalism. In spite of important differences and to some extent competing explanations, there are important similarities between the mainstream theories. What in the broader field of international relations and international political economy is generally referred to as the neo-neo-synthesis (i.e. a merger between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism) is also visible in the study of regionalism. Not only do the two neo-neo-approaches share a common epistemology and agree on many core assumptions, both are to a large extent focused on the variance of the institutionalization of regionalism and other more specific issues of regionalism.[4] Perhaps the main difference is that neorealists emphasize structural and power-oriented variables, while neoliberal institutionalists give more weight to the regulating influence of regional institutions as such.

Some interaction has also emerged between neo-neo theorists and economists. The theorists in the different camps do not necessarily reject one another's explanations but seek rather to complement the broader picture with their own particular variables. Just like the case during the old regionalism, when there was an interesting dialogue between neofunctionalism and orthodox regional economic integration, the main dialogue with 'outsiders' is when neo-neo theorists integrate economic variables into their frameworks, such as strategic trade theory[5] or broader market logics.[6] With regard to economics, the most interesting theorizing is conducted by those who transcend their own discipline by taking political, institutional and at times even security variables into account.[7]

With all this said, the overwhelming majority of scholars in the mainstream and rationalist camp maintain a rather narrow focus on states as aggregated, unitary units or on formal states-led projects. This is highly problematic, because as Bach points out, '[o]utside Europe, the rebirth of regionalism during the late 1980s often had little to do with the numerous international organizations that were supposed to promote its development'.[8] Likewise, in a comprehensive research project focusing on a wide range of regionalist projects in many parts of the world, one main conclusion was that the levels of institutionalization were, of course, varied, 'but appear not to be of fundamental importance to the cooperation which actually develops.'[9]

In fact, the rationalist theories are developed first and foremost for the study of Western Europe (where strong states and strong formal institutions prevail). When this case is transcended the main focus is placed on North America and Asia-Pacific, and then variation is explained in terms of how it differs from the 'standard case'. It is revealing that one of the core contributions to rationalist regionalism, *The Political Economy of Regionalism*, edited by Edward Mansfield and Helen Milner, 'conveniently' ignores Africa and the dynamic regionalization processes on this continent.[10]

Apart from the narrow empirical selection, the problem lies, generally speaking, in that the same underlying assumptions and conceptualizations that stem from a particular reading of European integration influence the description and prescription of regionalism in the rest of the world. This is problematic because the underlying ontological and theoretical assumptions — such as the notion of unitary states, the regulating influence of regional organizations, trade and policy-led economic integration and so on — are certainly more relevant in certain contexts than in others. In other words, the positivistic logic of investigation seems to result in a concern with the methodology of regionalism rather than with a systematic concern for the socio-economic circumstances and historical context in which regionalism occurs. This discursive hegemony is then maintained through that critical and reflective approaches are regarded as 'non-scientific' and speculative[11], or simply ignored.

The new regionalism approach

During the last decade a series of reflectivist and constructivist approaches have been developed for the study of regionalism.[12] They all reject the particular type of knowledge production and most often also what are considered to be the key research questions in the mainstream theories. They challenge the rationalists on that regionalism is primarily driven through formal supranational or intergovernmental regional frameworks and that it is mainly happening in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific.

This article takes its point of departure in one particular of these alternative approaches, namely, what has been established as the new regionalism approach (NRA).[13] The NRA emphasizes that regionalism must be placed within its particular historical context. Whereas the old regionalism in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by the bipolar Cold War structure with nation-states as the uncontested primary actors, the new wave of regionalism since the end of the 1980s needs to be related to the current transformation of the world, in which economic globalization represents one of the main challenges. Today's regionalism is extroverted rather than introverted, which reflects the deeper interdependence of today's global political economy. The global and worldwide nature of the new regionalism, as opposed to the Eurocentrism of the old regionalism, implies that the number, scope, and diversity of regionalism has grown significantly during the end of the 1980s. In essence, the new regionalism is a heterogeneous, comprehensive, multidimensional (and multilevel) phenomenon, which is created by state, market and society actors and covers economic, developmental, cultural, political, security as well as environmental aspects.

The NRA emphasizes the constructed nature of regions. Mostly when we speak of regions we actually mean regions 'in the making'. There are no given regions, but these are created

and recreated in the process of global transformation. It is conventionally held that a region refers to a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence. But what is referred to as a region with regard to economic relations may not always be a relevant delimitation seen from, for instance, a political or a cultural perspective. It is therefore necessary to maintain eclectic and flexible definitions of regions, whereby both state-centrism and the fixation on regional policy frameworks are transcended. Thus, regions must not be seen as simple aggregations of 'states', with the 'state actors' as the main agents creating this particular space. In the NRA, regional (inter-state) organizations are seen as a second order phenomenon compared to the *processes* that underlie regionalization in a particular geographical area.

An important feature of the NRA is the emphasis that a variety of state, market and society actors are engaged in a variety of regionalisms. This also implies that different types of actors often come together in multi-actor coalitions as well as overlapping and competing forms of regional governance. Somewhat connected to this is that the state needs to be further problematized and theorized. Although several of the reflectivist and critical theories of regionalism, including the NRA, emphasize the need to unpack the 'state' and the state-society complex and move beyond simplified notions of the state, more can certainly be done in this regard. This article seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of states and state actors in regionalism.

We therefore need to add more theorizing of the state to the NRA in order to understand why and how ruling political elites are able to use regionalism as a means to boost their rather narrow regime interests and also engage in shadow regionalism. It is widely agreed that the states in Africa are 'weak'. Some analysts have even referred to them as 'quasi-states'.[14] However, these states enjoy international recognition in spite of the fact that they often lack substantial and credible 'statehood' by the criteria of international law. The result is that in their international relations weak states (or 'quasi-states') tend to place heavy emphasis on formal and absolute sovereignty — i.e. the maintenance of existing borders and the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs — because it enhances the power of the governing political elite and its ability to stay in power.[15] As Sørensen points out, 'political elites in these states strongly embrace the institution of formal sovereignty; it is their right to continued existence as states'.[16] The principle of formal sovereignty has clearly been successful in Africa. In spite of the fact that most states in Africa are extremely 'weak', the states system and the old colonial boundaries have, with a few exceptions, remained intact and seemingly everlasting. The result is a somewhat paradoxical situation, which Bøås and Dokken have referred to as 'weak' states and 'strong' regimes'.[17] This distinction is crucial because it provides a basic means to unpack the 'state' at the same time as it draws attention to what 'regimes' may be doing in regionalism.

The post-colonial state in Africa is to an overwhelming extent ruled by personal leaders, who are often portrayed as embodying the idea of the state. The personal rulers and its regime often use the coercive instruments of the state in order to monopolize power and further their own interests, including to deny or restrict the political rights and opportunities of other groups according to a neopatrimonial logic (in which patrimonialism and bureaucratic norms coexist). This is very much an informalised political system whereby political power becomes

personal power and quite often a matter of the elite's self-enrichment.[18] Such 'privatization of the public' has at least two important consequences: (i) political power becomes personal power (ii) and politics becomes a business strategy, whereby political resources provide access to economic resources.[19]If this is accepted, then we can expect that political elites will try to use formal and diplomatic regionalism in order to boost regime interests and maximize formal sovereignty, rather than to produce public goods in demand. We will also expect that such attempt to reproduce the political regime through formal and diplomatic regionalism is intimately tied to a strategy whereby regionalism becomes a business strategy and 'whereby political resources provide access to economic resources'.

In talking about something as broad as 'the African state', generalisations are necessary, and the applicability of such an overview to each individual country in Africa is contingent. Whilst of course clientelism and patronage are *not* unique to Africa the type of intensive neopatrimonialism that we can observe across large swathes of the continent are indeed noteworthy. Crucially, within a neopatrimonial system resources extracted from the state or the economy are deployed as the means to maintain support and legitimacy. Control of the state serves the twin purposes of lubricating the patronage network and satisfying the desire of elites to enrich themselves (in many cases in a quite spectacular fashion). Because access to resources depends largely upon being inside the state apparatus, patrons reward supporters with sinecures within the bureaucracy or in government-controlled agencies and businesses. Indeed, the exercise of personalised exchange, clientelism and corruption is internalised and constitutes 'essential operating codes for politics' in Africa.[20]

Moving on, what has been largely overlooked in the regionalism debate, with the exception of some prolific scholars such as Daniel Bach, is the fact that neopatrimonialism may also have direct effect on regionalist projects.[21] Insights from the NRA that regionalism is more complex (and sometimes also more detrimental) than simply an instrument to enhance an ambiguous 'national interest' (realism) or to procure the 'public good' or 'trade' (liberalism) is crucial and helpful in this regard, and makes the NRA and neopatrimonial perspectives compatible and reinforcing.[22]

Regime-boosting regionalism

Regime-boosting regionalism seeks to strengthen the status, legitimacy and the general interests of the political regime (rather than the nation-state *per se*), both on the international arena and domestically. Many ruling (or crumbling) regimes and political leaders in Africa engage in symbolic and discursive activities, whereby they praise the goals of regionalism and regional organizations, sign cooperation treaties and agreements, and take part in 'summitry regionalism', but without having a commitment to or bearing the costs of policy implementation.

In order to understand how certain African regimes use regionalism for regime-boosting purposes, one needs to consider the nature of statehood on the continent. It is widely agreed that most states in Africa are 'weak'. There is also persuasive evidence that weak states tend to place heavy emphasis on formal and absolute sovereignty in their international

relations—i.e. the maintenance of existing borders and the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs—because it enhances the power of the governing political elite and its ability to stay in power (Clapham, 1996).

At first glance, regime-boosting regionalism has similarities with more conventional types of regional cooperation, both in liberal and realist thinking. However, it is different since it neither promotes various types of public goods (liberalism) nor broader national and societal interest (realism). Regionalism is instead used as an image-boosting instrument whereby leaders can show support and loyalty for each other, which enables them to raise the profile, status, formal sovereignty and image of their often authoritarian regimes, but without ensuring implementation of agreed policies. In contrast to much of the conventional readings on this topic, this does not represent a complete 'failure' or absence of collective action. Likewise, it is of less help to simply classify it as an absence of political regional integration and sovereignty transfer, since discourses around sovereignty is part of its creation. More importantly, from the point of view of the political regimes that favour such discursive strategies, it is a rather 'successful' type of collective action, indicating a particular regionalisation logic without formal 'regional integration' in the sense of sovereignty transfer. As Herbst (2009: 144) correctly points out, 'African leaders are extremely enthusiastic about particular types of regional cooperation, especially those that highlight sovereignty, help secure national leaders, and ask little in return'. The point is thus that African political elites continue to participate in regional organisations that have long records of failure. Those who believe that regional institutions exist in order to solve regional and collective problems cannot understand this tendency. But it is nonetheless understandable from a domestic perspective: 'Regional institutions in Africa usually work when they help African leaders with their domestic problems' (Herbst, 2009: 129).

An important way to achieve regime-boosting regionalism is through 'summitry', and high-profile meetings and conferences. The summits of heads of states of the main intergovernmental regional organizations, such as AU, ECOWAS and SADC, are gigantic and sometimes even majestic events where the political leaders can show to the world and their citizenry that they are promoting the cause of regional cooperation and that their political regime is 'important' (or at least 'visible') on the international arena. The summits and conferences are important components in discursive and even imaginary constructions of regional organizations, and this social practice is then repeated and institutionalized at a large number of ministerial and other meetings, which in reality involves no real debate and no wider consultation within or between member states (Simon, 2003: 71). Sidaway and Gibb explain the logic of such discursive strategies and practices within SADC:

> formal participation in SADC is another way whereby the states [i.e. regimes] seek to confirm, fix and secure the appearance and power of 'sovereignty'. Rather like the boundaries and colour schemes of political maps, participation in fora such as SADC is a way in which the state is actively represented as a real, solid, omnipresent authority. In doing so, the fact that it is a contested, socially constructed (not simply natural) object is obscured, and states would have us take them for granted as the natural objects of governance and politics (Sidaway and Gibb, 1998: 179).

The overlapping membership of regional organizations on the African continent has been debated for several decades. And the seemingly ineffective overlap is often taken as an indicator of the 'failure' of African regionalism or at least as a poor political commitment to ensure a more appropriate division of labour. Considering that the overlap is such a distinctive feature of regionalism in Africa, it is not only relevant to assess the negative impacts of the overlap in itself, but also ask why in whose interests it prevails, even has been institutionalized. The maintenance of a large number of competing and overlapping intergovernmental regional organization may arguably by a deliberate strategy in order to increase the possibilities for verbal regionalism and regime-boosting. To the extent that policy implementation is not the main concern such pluralism may actually be a way to construct 'disorder' and competing regional agendas (cf. Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Most of the main regional organizations in Africa (such as AU, ECOWAS, EAC, IGAD, SADC, UEMOA) have undergone comprehensive institutional reform during recent decades, and in many cases the EU has been the major source of inspiration and supporter. In general there are convincing reasons to promote institutional strengthening of regional organizations, since most of them are weak, undersupplied and lack the capacities to ensure policy implementation. But institution-building is not an end in itself and can also be used for regime-boosting purposes.

The many institutional reforms of SADCC/SADC are particularly relevant for this discussion. The allocation of sectoral responsibilities to each member country was an innovative institutional structure at the start of SADCC in 1980. At the time the decentralized structure was seen as a way to provide a sense of 'ownership' to each of the member states and avoid the cost of a regional bureaucracy (SADC, 1997: 63). However, it is openly discussed and also admitted by SADC policy-makers that this institutional structure was then captured by governments seeking to promote their own national and more myopic goals. The national ownership mentality of each sector became so strong that it even resulted in competition between countries, with each sector representing 'national pride' and status. Particularly important from a regime-boosting perspective is the fact that even those sectoral coordinating units that lacked the administrative capacity and the funds to function and implement projects and programmes were still seen as important. According to two self-critical evaluations, SADC's type of cooperation 'encourages political (and rhetorical) rather than economic developments' (SADC, 1997: 63; Isaksen and Tjønneland, 2001).

Furthermore, at least until the mid-1990s, the implementation that actually was achieved within SADCC/SADC was first and foremost tied to its project portfolio. Several factors point in the direction of regime-boosting regionalism. It is, for instance, no secret that the majority of the projects in SADC's project portfolio were more a direction of intent, even a 'wishing list' rather than a development plan with a realistic funding plan. Since the majority of the projects (70-90 percent) have been/are externally funded by the donor community (especially the Nordic countries and the EU), this enabled the SADC regimes to pay tribute to the goals of regionalism without providing the funds for implementation. In addition, the fact that 'the majority of projects are national and lack a clear regional focus' has

enabled the participating regimes to design and implement 'national' projects dressed up as regional (SADC, 1997: 63; Isaksen and Tjønneland, 2001).

Ever since the transformation from SADCC into SADC in 1992, the organization has been involved in a slow process of gradual institutional reform and centralization. The interesting thing is that that symbolic and regime-boosting politics have actually increased in spite of the institutional reforms. Such diplomacy is taking place in the context of increased international pressure on certain political regimes in the region, such as Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Namibia and Zambia. Similarly to many other regional organizations in Africa (e.g. OAU/AU, IGAD, and ECOWAS), SADC has often been referred to as 'an old boys' club' where political leaders are able to show loyalty to one another.

Shadow regionalism

An increasing amount of studies in the research field draw attention to the vibrant informal economic processes of cross-border and regional interaction in large parts of Africa (Bach, 1999a; Grant and Söderbaum, 2003; Söderbaum and Taylor, 2008). It is undisputed that many parts of Africa are characterised by myriad of informal and non-institutional interactions and activities between a mosaic of informal workers and self-employed agents, families, business networks, petty traders, migrant labour, refugees, and so forth. In fact, the size of the informal economy in Africa, relative to the formal economy, is the highest in the world. This is seen by the multitude of small-scale cross-border traders and vendors buying and selling all types of goods, such as vegetables, fruits, staple products, clothes and small home appliances. Sometimes these small-scale informal traders are also ending up building viable business enterprises. There is a rich variety of actors of assorted kinds involved in these processes, but rather than depicting these practices only as a way for poor people to survive, it is often closely connected to the informalisation of politics in Africa.

It is difficult to dispute that political power in Africa is often 'informalised'. State power within Africa is less about administration over the state and its attendant geographic area, with all the implications this might have regarding the provision of services to the populace, and more about the running of a relatively limited (in geographic terms and economic embeddedness) set of resources that are the sources of revenue and the foundations for entrenching power through patronage. Indeed, the informalisation of politics on the continent inevitably impacts upon the types and varieties of regionalism in Africa.

Shadow regionalism—or what Bach refers to as 'trans-state regionalization' (Bach 1999, 2005)—is an important ingredient of regionalism portrayed by the so called new regionalists. Shadow regionalism suggests that regime actors use their power positions within the state apparatus in order to erect a complex mode of regionalism, characterised by informality and driven by rent-seeking and personal self-interest.

Shadow regionalism grows from below and is built upon rent-seeking or the stimulation of patron-client relationships. As such it undermines the regulatory capacity of the state and formal regionalism/regional integration (i.e. it represents informal economic regionalisation sheltered by discursive regionalism and/or failed political integration). The profits involved in shadow networks are considerable. These networks are also inequitable

and extremely uneven since they accumulate power and resources at the top, to the rich and powerful, and those who have jobs, rather than to the unemployed, the urban poor, and rural producers. Indeed, small-scale cross-border traders have a disadvantage since the economies of scale are 'only for those who can pay the necessary bribes' (Bach, 1997: 162).

It is important to emphasize that these accumulation strategies do not occur just anywhere. Shadow networks arise, obviously, easier in the context of shadow states or in the presence of large border disparities (and as seen below it may also involve civil society actors).[1] Shadow regionalism suggests that certain rentier-classes actively seek to preserve existing boundary disparities (e.g. customs, monetary, fiscal and normative) and, exactly like regime-boosting, try to resist implementation or rationalization of formal regional economic integration schemes. Indeed, the shadow (or 'trans-state') networks depend on the failure of both the formal economy and of policy-led regionalism. Consequently, when political leaders and policy-makers resist formal regionalism (or formal regional integration), this may very well be a deliberate strategy to maintain the *status quo* in order to not disrupt shadow activities.

The attempts to restrict shadow and trans-state informal flows have often been unsuccessful. In the current (neoliberal and post-Cold War) context where the state apparatus itself offers less opportunities for private accumulation and where formal barriers between countries have been reduced, shadow regionalism stems no longer only from the exploitation of existing border disparities. Instead it has expanded to more criminal activities, such as new trades in illicit drugs, including heroin, mandrax and cocaine, arms, light weapons and other merchandise of war. In certain respects shadow networks have entered a new phase, whereby they are better understood as 'networks of plunder', profiting from war and chaos or warlord politics (MacLean 1999). The networks of plunder can even be actively involved in the creation and promotion of war, conflict and destruction, as seen in the more turbulent parts of Africa, such as the West African war zone, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Southern Africa. Taking the example of the Great Lakes region, Taylor and Williams argue that, for well-placed elites and business people, the war in this region potentially offers substantial resources for those able to exploit them. Foreign involvement is not only about preserving national security and defeating enemies, but also about securing access to resource-rich areas, and establishing privatised accumulation networks that can emerge and prosper under conditions of war and anarchy (Taylor and Williams, 2001: 273).

These observations show that regionalism arises for a host of complex reasons. Potentially, state actors create regionalisation in order to achieve private goals and promote particular (vested) interests rather than broader societal interests (neopatrimonialism). Bach claims, for instance, that regional organisations constitute a means for 'resource capture' and international patronage (Bach, 2005: 182-83). This results in regionalisation without (the implementation of) formal regional integration; the informal and the formal being in a symbiotic relationship.

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[1] Considering the frequent use of the concept of 'shadow state' in the debate on the political economy in Africa (Reno, 1995), it is rather surprising that it is not used more often in the debate on regionalism in Africa.

Conclusion

Regionalism in Africa is multidimensional and complex. The point of departure of this article is that there are important gaps in the analysis of regionalism in Africa. This can be explained by the overwhelming dominance of mainstream theories of regionalism, which privilege formal and inter-state policy frameworks in line with a particular reading of European integration. This has lead to a neglect of other forms of regionalism, such as regime-boosting and shadow regionalism. This article has tried to theorize these two neglected forms of regionalism and provide empirical substantiation of the dynamics at play.

In the article it is argued that the development during the last decade of a series of reflectivist and constructivist approaches to the study of regionalism have been refreshing. The article took its point of departure in what has been established as the NRA. However, the NRA has had a somewhat too optimistic interpretation of the role of the state and formal policy-framework in regionalism. This has resulted in that the role of the state has not been problematized and theorized enough, and also a neglect of the negative role that states and state representatives may have for the erection of detrimental forms of regionalism.

Therefore, further theorization of the state was added to the original NRA-framework. In this regard it was emphasized that post-colonial states are often concerned with maximizing formal and absolute sovereignty. A fundamental distinction was also made between states and political regimes. Many states are 'weak', but regimes are enduring, and sometimes even 'strong'. This suggests that, in contrast to prevailing wisdom, regimes are able to use regionalism in order to promote their own myopic and even personal interests, by way of regime-boosting and shadow regionalism. These two types of regionalism suit the narrow interests of regime actors and political leaders, but it is at the same time detrimental for the broader citizenry and the poor.

Regime-boosting regionalism occurs when ruling regimes engage in a rather intense diplomatic game which is intended to raise the status and image of the political regime, both on the international arena and domestically. By way of rhetorical regionalism the regimes can be perceived as promoters of the goals and values of regionalism and regional integration. This enables them to raise the profile and status of their authoritarian regimes.

By showing commitment to and participating in the process of regionalism and regional integration, political leaders are able to promote absolute state sovereignty and the profile of their political regime at the same time as it enables them to mask a poor human rights record and a general neglect of the poor. It furthermore enables them to use formal regionalism and regime-boosting as a façade in order to bolster private economic interests and patronage system through shadow regionalism.

Shadow regionalism is an informal type of regionalism that occurs behind a façade of formal regionalism and formal diplomacy. It is driven by particular officials in the state bureaucracy, grouped with certain illegal businesspeople, who come together in order to bolster their own patronage networks and weaken those of potential challengers, and enrich

themselves through informal market activities. In short, formal regionalism and political power is a business strategy.

It is important to recognize that regime-boosting regionalism and shadow regionalism are often closely related. They travel well together, and may even be mutually reinforcing. It is often the same types of actors who are involved in both these kinds of regionalism.

It must be underlined that it is by no means all political regimes and governments in Africa that are involved in regime-boosting regionalism and shadow regionalism. However, this type of regionalism may block, crowd-out or even destroy more egalitarian forms of regionalism.

Authoritarian regimes and personal rulers are able to hijack regional organizations in order to promote their own personal political and economic interests. It is naïve to expect that any projects where dictators and personal rulers play a central role will suddenly take on more egalitarian or progressive forms simply because it is regionalism. We should not expect that Robert Mugabe sent the military under the SADC Organ to intervene in the DRC because he is a trying to make peace. The analysis conducted in this article suggests that regime-boosting and shadow regionalism are both important explanations of these interventions.

It must be pointed out that there is nothing that suggests that these forms of regionalism are limited to Africa. On the contrary, the two forms of regionalism seem to be a general feature of regionalism worldwide. The theoretical framework developed here should be applied to other regions, such as Europe, Americas, Asia and so forth. We need to try regime-boosting and shadow regionalism on a multitude of new cases.

At the same time we also need to develop the methodology and theory of regime-boosting and shadow regionalism. We need to develop sharper research tools to measure and assess these two types of regionalism. Since the real interests are often hidden behind a façade of rhetoric, then a future research agenda should continue to debate how to develop sharper variables and indicators.

This paper challenges one influential strand of research in the field, namely the type of research that claims that regional organizations play important roles in the transition and consolidation of democracy. This scholarship claims that domestic elites can, "with a little help from their friends in regional organizations", advance the cause of democracy. In sharp contrast, this study shows how political leaders and state representatives are able to manipulate regional organizations in order to further their narrow political and economic regime interests and self-interests. In other words, the study shows how regional organizations in Africa sustain clientelism, corruption and discrimination — "with a little help from their friends in regional organizations".

We emphasise two main strategies for clientelism, corruption and discrimination: *Regime-boosting*, which implies a vivid game of rhetorical and symbolic regionalism, but without implementation. *Shadow regionalism* occurs behind a façade of formal regionalism and formal diplomacy. It is driven by particular officials in the state bureaucracy, who come together with illegal businesspeople in order to either bolster patronage networks and weaken political challengers, or serve as instruments for self-enrichment through informal market activities.

Notes

[1] David Simon, 'Introduction: Shedding the Past; Shaping the Future', in David Simon (ed.) *Reconfiguring the Region. South Africa in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1998), p. 3.

[2] Nana Poku, *Regionalization and Security in Southern Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 6.

[3] The concepts of regionalism and regionalization need to be clarified. In the broadest sense, 'regionalism' refers to the general phenomenon, such as the old or the new regionalism. In an operational sense, 'regionalism' represents the body of ideas, values and concrete objectives that are aimed at creating, maintaining or modifying the provision of security, wealth and other goals within a particular region or as a type of world order. 'Regionalization' denotes the (empirical) process of regional cooperation, integration, coherence and identity within a particular cross-national geographical space (issue-specific or general). It furthermore implies an activist element, a strategy of regionalization, which can be pursued by both state and non-state actors. Regionalization may be caused by regionalism, but it may also emerge regardless of whether there is a regionalist project and regionalism ideology or not.

[4] See Edward Mansfield and Helen Milner (eds.) *The Political Economy of Regionalism* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997); Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration. Europe and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[5] Helen Milner, 'Industries, Governments, and the Creation of Regional Trade Blocs', in Mansfield and Milner (eds.) *The Political Economy of Regionalism*; Pier Carlo Padoan, 'Political Economy of New Regionalism and World Governance', in Mario Telò (ed.) *European Union and New Regionalism. Regional actors and global governance in a post-hegemonic era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

[6] Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration*.

[7] Sheila Page, *Regionalism in the Developing Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Peter Robson, 'The New Regionalism and Developing Countries', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31 (3) (1993): 329-48.

[8] Daniel Bach, 'Revisiting a Paradigm', in Daniel C. Bach (ed.) *Regionalisation in Africa. Integration & Disintegration* (London: James Currey, 1999), p. 1.

[9] Ian Kearns and Glenn Hook (1999) 'Conclusion: Subregionalism — an Assessment', in Glenn Hook and Ian Kearns (eds.) *Subregionalism and World Order* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 251.

[10] Also see Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.) *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds.), *Regionalism in World Politics. Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration*.

[11] Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration*. pp. 3-16.

[12] Andrew Gamble, and Anthony Payne (eds.), *Regionalism and World Order (*Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Glenn Hook and Ian Kearns (eds.) *Subregionalism and World Order* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Shaun Breslin and Glenn Hook (eds.), *Microregionalism and World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Morten Bøås, Marianne Marchand and Timothy M. Shaw (eds.) *New Regionalisms in the New Millennium*, Special Issue of *Third World Quarterly* 20 (5): 897-910 (October); Hentz, James J. and Morten Bøås (eds.) *New and Critical Security and Regionalism: Beyond the Nation State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Björn Hettne, Andras Inotai and Osvaldo Sunke, *Studies in the New Regionalism*, Volume I-V (Basingstoke: Macmillan/Palgrave, 1999-2001).

[13] Hettne et al, *Studies in the New Regionalism*, Volume I-V.

[14] Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1990).

[15] Christopher Clapham, Af*rica and the International System. The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[16] Georg Sørensen, 'Rethinking Sovereignty and Development', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 2 (4) (1999), p. 397.

[17] Morten Bøås and Karin Dokken, *Internasjonal Politikk og Utenrikspolitikk i Afrika sør for Sahara*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), p. 138.

[18] Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (James Currey, 1999). Jean-Francoise Médard (1982) 'The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientelism or Neopatrimonialism?', in Christopher Clapham (ed.) *Private Patronage and Public Power. Political Clientelism in the Modern State*. London: Frances Pinter.

[19] Morten Bøås, 'Liberia — the Hellbound Heart? Regime Breakdown and the Deconstruction of Society', *Alternatives*, 22 (3) (1997), p. 363

[20] Michael Bratton & Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (University Press, 1997), p. 63.

[21] Daniel C. Bach (eds) *Regionalisation in Africa. Integration and Disintegration* (James Currey, 1999).

[22] See Fredrik Söderbaum, *The Political Economy of Regionalism*.