

Rethinking the links between micro-regions and macro-regions

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Introduction

This chapter challenges the prevailing tendency in the research field to make overly sharp distinctions between micro-regions and macro-regions. Such assumptions result in that scholars underestimate not only the heterogeneity and diversity of contemporary regionalisms but also the relationships between regions in interaction. The approach adopted here is that learning more about the links between micro-regions and macro-regions will be limited by pre-given and fixed regional delimitations. It is also insufficient to characterize regions as being either ‘from above’ (macro) or ‘from below’ (micro), as was often done in previous literature. Drawing on insights from the New Regionalism Approach (NRA) and spatial analysis, this chapter offers a framework for rethinking regional space and improved understanding of the links between micro-regions and macro-regions. One core component of the framework is to avoid state-centrism and ‘methodological nationalism’. Once ‘national space’ is problematized, it is easier to recognise both that all regions are socially constructed — with porous and fuzzy borders — and that they interact and shape one another. The empirical case studies from Africa as well as Asia illuminate the interactions and overlaps between macro-regions and micro-regions (see Koff in this volume for an analysis of the links between macro-regions and micro-regions in South America).

Rethinking regional space

It is more or less generally accepted that we may distinguish between different scales (or levels) of regions and regionalism, such as macro-regions, sub-regions and micro-regions (Breslin and Hook 2002; Perkmann and Sum 2002; Söderbaum 2016, 2005). A problem in previous literature lies in the tendency to make overly sharp distinctions between macro-regions and micro-regions and to concentrate on one particular type of region. This has resulted in two largely separated discourses and debates about regions (i.e. the study of regions within IR and regional studies). It has also lead to that the linkages between different regional processes and strategies are underemphasized and quite often ignored. The view adopted in this chapter is that learning more about these linkages should enhance our understanding of the interaction of different forms of region-making.

From the perspective of International Relations (IR), macro-regions (‘world regions’ or ‘international regions’) are usually viewed as large territorial units or subsystems that exist between the ‘state’ and the ‘global’ levels. Sub-regions (or meso-regions) are similar to macro-regions in that they also lie between the global and the national levels, but on a lower scale than

macro-regions. The Nordic region within Western Europe is an example, as is the Mano River Union (MRU) in West Africa. Previously, these two scales or levels of regions (macro-regions and sub-regions) were the main foci in the field of IR, and it is only more recently that micro-regions and cross-border regions have become part of the debate in IR.

Historically, micro-regions have been seen purely as spaces within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (or of empires). Indeed, the conventional and ‘old’ form of micro-regionalism is purely sub-national and takes place within the parameters of a nation-state, which at least in part explains why it has received so little attention in the field of IR. These regions are often shaped by the relationship between central government and micro-regional administrative or political forces (Keating and Laughing 1997). They can therefore be described as ‘vertical’ (Jönsson et al 2000, 149). In contrast, more recent and so-called ‘new’ forms of cross-border micro-regions are often ‘horizontal’ and networked. Often they develop along the external boundaries of the state and often the motives are economic rather than security-oriented as during the Cold War, although political and cultural motives may certainly enter into the process as well. These ‘new’ forms of cross-border micro-regionalisms often involve a wide range of different public and private actor as well as other local/regional actors grouped in more horizontal networks, which are designed in order to exploit or link up to macro-regions or globalization processes (Perkmann and Sum 2002; Keating and Laughing 1997; Klecha-Tylec 2017; Söderbaum 2005). As a result, the relationships between macro-regions and micro-regions have become varied and diverse.

The links between micro-regions and macro-regions are not simply under-explored from an empirical point of view. The neglect is also a theoretical and conceptual problem. Clearly, our understanding of the links between the different scales of regions will be limited by fixed and pre-given regional delimitations, or by the view that macro-regions and micro-regions are different phenomena altogether (even if sometimes they are). It is insufficient to characterize them as being either ‘from above’ (macro) or ‘from below’ (micro) as was often done in the past. As Mittelman points out, ‘globalization has not spawned such ideal types but, rather, a mix of contested ... regional projects ’ (Mittelman 2000: 158). Thus, all types of regions can be created both from ‘above’ and from ‘below’; sometimes the state has more autonomy with regard to social forces and at other times the global market penetrates more deeply.

Here it needs saying that not all micro-regions necessarily are ‘micro’ or small in character. Some are not very large in size, while others are. Often, the size of micro-regions depends on the size of the higher scales of regions as well as the size of the countries involved. As an example, given the comprehensive size of the North American macro-region and its constituent countries, it can be expected that some North American micro-regions are very large. There is in fact a functional

unity to the entire US–Mexican *maquiladora* cross-border zone, which can be understood as a rather comprehensive ‘Cal-Mex’ or ‘Tex-Mex’ cross-border micro-region (which in terms of economic might is more powerful than many macro-regions in the developing world). This explains why it is more appropriate to talk about entangled and hierarchical sets of scales of regions and not necessarily different qualities and sizes of micro-regions and macro-regions.

Problematizing space

The next step in building the framework is to transcend ‘methodological nationalism’. This methodological perspective refers to the notion that the nation-state is the main, if not the only, relevant actor or unit of social processes (Beck 1997). This perspective has resulted in many superficial representations of spatial horizons and practices. Niemann is correct in that there has been a systematic exclusion of spatial analysis from the debate of global politics and there is a deep-seated theoretical inability in the dominant frameworks in IR to come to grips with social phenomena which cannot be represented solely through the nation-state (Niemann 2000: 4-5).

Rejecting ‘methodological nationalism’ is by no means equivalent to ignoring the state and national space. The methodological issue is instead to transcend the Western conceptions of the unitary Westphalian nation-state. In a much-discussed article, geographer John Agnew argues that the IR theorists too often fall into ‘the territorial trap’ of the nation-state:

when the territoriality of the state is debated by international relations theorists the discussion is overwhelmingly in terms of the persistence or obsolescence of the territorial state as an unchanging entity rather than in terms of its significance and meaning in different historical-geographical circumstances. Contemporary events call this approach into question. The end of the Cold War, the increased velocity and volatility of the world economy, and the emergence of political movements outside the framework of territorial states, suggest the need to consider the territoriality of states in historical context. Conventional thinking relies on three geographical assumptions - states as fixed units of sovereign space, the domestic/foreign polarity, and states as ‘containers’ of societies - that have led into the ‘territorial trap’. (Agnew 1994: 53)

According to Jessop (2003), the overwhelming dominance of the national scale is associated with the ‘thirty glorious years’ of economic expansion after the end of the Second World War. Since then the process of globalization has further intensified and can now be seen to have reached a qualitatively new stage, resulting in ‘the relativization of scale’ (Jessop 2003). Somewhat similar to Agnew, Jessop argues that the proliferation of spatial and temporal horizons resulting from ‘the relativization of scale’ involves very different challenges and threats for economic, political and social forces from those that prevailed when the national scale and territorial statehood were dominant. There is therefore a need to transcend the obsession with the state and the national

space and start to think in terms of more complex, multilevel political structures, in which the state is 'unbundled', re-organized and assumes different functions and where non-state actors also contribute at various scales and levels.

When the 'taken for granted' national scale is problematized, then other scales/spaces (and actors) automatically receive more recognition. A richer and more nuanced conception of context and space sees the state's territory as only one of a number of different geographical scales (Agnew 1998: 2). This multilayeredness has been much discussed with regard to European integration. Few scholars deny that states continue to be important actors in EU politics and will do so for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, as emphasized by the model of multi-level governance, it is hard to deny that the central state has lost some of its monopoly over policy-making at various scales. According to Hooghe and Marks (2001), multi-level governance conceptualizes the EU as a polity where decision-making authority is dispersed across multiple territorial levels from the European, to the national and down to the micro-regional. This draws attention not only to the tiers of governance but also to the complex web of actors (state and non-state) who are nested into different scales or levels of governance. It needs recognition that these multilevel processes are not limited to the EU itself. As underlined by James Scott (in this volume) a range of 'cross-border relations between the EU and post-Soviet states have evolved rapidly, with cities, [micro-]regions, states and civil society opening new avenues of communication with their neighbours'. The empirical illustrations from Africa and Asia will illuminate similar processes and spatial entanglements.

It is necessary to think beyond fixed and discrete levels of analysis/governance. In Jessop's (2003: 182) language 'there is a proliferation of discursively constituted and institutionally materialised and embedded spatial scales ... that are related in increasingly complex tangled hierarchies rather than being simply nested one with the other, with different temporalities as well as spatialities'. Different scalar processes and strategies often combine to form more complex networks or strategies as well as tangled hierarchies of regions at various scales. From such a perspective, there is no pre-given set of spaces and scales; instead new spaces emerge or existing ones gain in 'thickness'. Different scales of action are linked in a variety of complex ways. This implies that there is a varied set of actors (state and non-state) who are nested into different policy scales, which in turn blurs the distinction not only between the international and the domestic, but also between macro-regions and micro-regions.

Regions as social constructions

The next step in the framework is to approach regions as social constructions. The framework developed in this chapter draws heavily on the NRA (Söderbaum 2004, 2016; also see Hettne et al 1999, Hettne 2005; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003; Söderbaum and Taylor 2008; Shaw *et al.* 2011). The original point of departure of the NRA was dissatisfaction with the mainstream and rationalists' concern with more or less fixed, discrete and material definitions of regions. Regardless of whether previous literature has focused on macro-regions or micro-regions, a considerable degree of research capacity has been devoted to determine what 'types' of regions are the most functional, instrumental and efficient (to rule and to govern) (Jönsson *et al* 2000, 15). Furthermore, too often, especially in political science and economics, regions have been taken as pre-given, defined in advance of research, and seen as particular policy-led and institutional/administrative frameworks.

It is of course possible to explore links between micro-regions and macro-regions through analytical perspectives that take regions as pre-given, fixed and material. There are, for instance, many interesting studies on the linkages between the European Commission and myriad of micro-regional administrative-political entities in Europe (see Keating and Loughlin 1997). From this perspective, the core question would be whether there are harmonious or conflictual relationships between a set of pre-given and fixed micro-regions and macro-regions. However, the constructivist perspective emphasized in this chapter goes beyond dichotomous relationships and emphasizes that 'regional space' is increasingly becoming much more elusive and multifaceted. This has important consequences for the way we approach and study regions. From a constructivist perspective, regions must not be taken for granted; they are neither 'natural', objective, essential nor simply material objects. This implies going beyond classical and essentialist conceptions of a region as 'a limited number of states linked together by a geographic relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence' (Nye 1968: vii). The constructivist perspective goes beyond geography and material interdependencies. Regions are social and cognitive constructs; they are in the making (or un-making), their boundaries are shifting. A constructivist perspective usually also implies a more dynamic and potentially also a more multi-scalar relationship between micro-regions and macro-regions.

The framework developed here transcends the view that regions are 'containers' or locations for social processes, dominated by state actors or the territorial nation-state. Insights from geography and sociology teach us that regions simply are not backdrops, containers or locations, nor are they autonomous and fixed constructs operating 'above' or 'below' actors (such as states) (Emerson 2014). Both macro-regions and micro-regions are constitutive of society itself; they are viewed as

social constructions and are held together by historically contingent interactions, shared beliefs and identities, norms and practices. From this perspective, it is assumed that an actor's decision to engage in region-making and regional cooperation may depend not only on fixed material incentives and resources (including power capability, routine behaviour or 'economic man'), but also on ideas, norms as well as identities. Indeed, regionalizing actors depend on who they are, their worldviews, who other actors are as well as the quality of their interaction.

Viewing regions as social constructs implies simultaneously that they are politically contested. And because regions are political and social constructs, devised by human (state and non-state) actors in order to protect or transform existing structures, they may fail, just like other social projects. Regions can be disrupted from within and from without. Such political dimensions of regionalism draw attention to agency, which is crucial for any understanding of region-formation and region-making (Lorenz-Carl and Rempe 2013). Regions may emerge in order to achieve and protect crucial values, such as economic development, ecology and peace. Sometimes, regions and regionalism will help states to protect and achieve such values, whereas at other times the values are not ensured by the state at all. As a result, the nation-state will not necessarily be the main or only object of political allegiance (although sometimes it may be).

It follows that regionalism will not necessarily be harmonious or beneficial to all participants and stakeholders. Some actors will be able to use regional frameworks in order to achieve private goals and promote particular group-specific interests rather than broader societal and common interests. Under certain circumstances regionalism will be exclusionary, exploitative, or reinforce asymmetries and imbalances. This implies that regionalism becomes a political struggle between various social forces over the definition of the region, how it should be organized politically, and its insertion into the global order. Alternative, transformative and counter-hegemonic visions of regionalism may emerge in response, depending on the dominant form of regionalism and who sets the agenda. In turn, this implies that nearly always there are a multitude of strategies and ideas about a particular region, which mingle, merge and clash. Rethinking regional space along the lines of the NRA provides the tools to understand such heterogeneous processes. The next two empirical sections will reveal the interaction between macro-regions and micro-regions in Africa and Asia.

Africa

Although there exists a variety of studies on regionalism in Africa, the majority of such research focuses on macro-regions and inter-state formal frameworks, such as the African Union (AU), the

Common Market for Eastern and Southern African (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and so forth. Much of this work is decidedly state-centric and in general somewhat ignorant of what is actually ‘happening’, in favour of idealistic accounts about what state actors say they are going to do to build states-led regionalist framework. However, the African continent has not missed out on the micro-regional phenomenon, and increasingly micro-regions and macro-regions have become more interlinked than in the past.

There are a range number of varied micro-regions all over Africa, such as the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC), the Zambezi Valley region, the Zambia-Malawi-Mozambique Growth Triangle, the Parrott’s Beak in the Sierra Leone-Liberia border zone as well as a series of other micro-regions in the Great Lakes Region, East Africa and North Africa (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008). It is evident that the African micro-regions are often both formal *and* informal, and many of them are cross-border in nature (which explains why border studies has become vital for understanding contemporary Africa). This situation is due to, among other things, the permeability of formal national borders and the ‘surface nature’ of most nation-state projects on the continent. In fact, borders either essentially do not ‘exist’ in the Westphalian sense in a considerable number of spaces in Africa (being ignored by actors such as local populations and refugees), or they are used strategically by (often self-styled) representatives of the state to extract resources and rents (Bach 2016; Söderbaum and Taylor 2008). In either case, the notion of fixed boundaries and delineations has little purchase in whole swathes of Africa, with deep implications for the respacing of Africa (Engel and Nugent 2009).

It is undisputed that many parts of Africa are characterised by myriad of informal and non-institutional cross-border 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 increasing documentation of a rich variety of flexible and quite often ‘people-centred’ cross-border and cooperation efforts that have multiplied in West Africa (OECD/SWAC 2017). ‘Towns have signed twinning agreements, civil society associations mediate in conflicts, medical centres coordinate resources, schools welcome cross-border students, stock breeders have set up transhumance corridors, traders engage in the setting up of cross-border markets’ (Abdoul and

Trémolières 2007: 23). Major urban centres, with their agglomerating potential, play an important role in these processes, in combination with several factors of cross-border socio-cultural proximity. Research on the topic shows that West African cross-border zones are becoming ever more populated and have an increasing potential for peace and development, and there is a deep-rooted belief in the benefits of border trade among local populations. In this way, ‘cross-border cooperation is the driver and engine of [macro-]regional integration, a kind of regional cooperation transcending the micro-region itself and acting as an effective lynchpin for a variety of integrative trends’ at various scales’ (Abdoul and Trémolières 2007: 23).

One of the main problems in the development of these cross-border micro-regional activities is that they are largely informal and unorganized, and until recently micro-regional agents have not been able to form a pressure group capable of making their voices heard at the policy-making level. This is related to that these notions of cross-border and micro-regional interaction have been circumscribed due to state-centric notions of how the economic sectors should be managed. In more recent years, however, this has changed and governments and macro-regional regional organizations have started to try to build on the dynamism of cross-border micro-regions. The Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) at the OCED Secretariat have been catalytic for linking these diverse micro-regions and different types of macro-regional policy frameworks in West Africa (OECD/SWAC 2017). Importantly, governments and states-led macro-regional organizations — such as the AU, ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) — have responded favourably and developed policy-making through a variety of committees and programmes for the development of cross-border micro-regional and local economic and socio-cultural dynamics ‘from below’ (OECD/SWAC 2017).

There are also much more critical interpretations of the links between micro-regions and macro-regions. Rather than depicting the cross-border practices mainly as a way for poor people to survive and find functional solutions in a difficult environment, Daniel Bach emphasizes that many cross-border flows are controlled by a small number of powerful economic entrepreneurs, political elites and foreign brokers that come together into what is referred to as ‘trans-state networks’. According to Bach, traders and entrepreneurs are able to position their relatives or associates on both sides of border markets so as to benefit from twinned markets (Bach 2016: 71). The ‘state’ component results from that, according to Bach, political rentier-classes are deeply involved in these activities and use their power positions within the state apparatus in order to participate in these largely informal activities (Bach 1999a, 2016). Trans-state networks grow from below and are built upon rent-seeking or the stimulation of patron-client relationships. As

such it undermines the regulatory capacity of the state and formal macro-regional policy frameworks. The trans-state networks accumulate power and resources at the top, to the rich and powerful, 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 1999b: 162).

Importantly, these accumulation strategies do not occur just anywhere but prosper in the presence of large border disparities, implying that rentier-classes actively seek to preserve existing boundary disparities (e.g. customs, monetary, fiscal and normative) and therefore try to resist implementation or rationalization of formal macro-regional economic integration schemes. In fact, according to Bach, trans-state networks depend on the failure of both the formal economy and of policy-led macro-regionalism (Bach 2016: 70-75). Consequently, when political leaders and policy-makers resist formal macro-regionalism, this may very well be a deliberate strategy to maintain the *status quo* in order to not disrupt informal cross-border activities.

In a context where the state apparatus itself offers less opportunities for private accumulation and where formal barriers between countries have been reduced, trans-state activities 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. These ‘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 West African war zones, the Horn of Africa, Central Africa, and parts of Southern Africa (MacLean 2002; cf. Bach 2016: 72). For well-placed elites and business people, these wars potentially offer 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 regions emerge and deepen for a host of complex reasons. The historical and political context is important. Yet another type of relationship between micro-regions and macro-regions have emerged in Eastern and Southern Africa through a series of spatial development initiatives (SDIs) and development/transport corridor projects (Söderbaum and Taylor 2003, 2008). There are a vast number of corridor and SDIs in Eastern and Southern Africa Development corridors (Maputo, Beira, Coast-to-Coast, Lapset, Lobito, Nacala, Tazara and the SDIs of Phalaborwa, Platinum, Zambezi Valley and Walvis Bay etc. (Söderbaum 2004). The SDIs and corridor projects are policy-driven and purport to be short-term, targeted attempts to

stimulate economic ‘growth’ by creating globally competitive spatial entities through new investment, infrastructural development and job creation.

Many, but not all, of the SDIs and corridors are cross-border in nature. The strategy is to implement one or several industrial ‘mega-projects’, as illustrated by the Mozambique Aluminium Smelter (Mozal) of the ‘flagship’ corridor: the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC). The ‘mega-projects’ are believed to enhance different types of spread effects and linkages in the broader regional economy. The SDIs and corridors are governed in a ‘top-down’ fashion by a limited group of experts and policy-makers who come together with private investors in small, flexible and rather introverted policy mechanisms and public-private partnerships, in order to fast-track implementation of bankable investment projects in the micro-region. These governance mechanisms work rather well for a small group of policy-makers and large companies on the ‘inside’, but have few links to stakeholders on the ‘outside’ and people living in the corridor areas (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008). Basically, it is about investment attraction and market guidance, whereby the state suggests opportunities to the (big business) private sector, in order to build infrastructure and with the hope that it will create jobs. As stated in the proceedings of a workshop on SDIs in South Africa and Southern Africa: ‘SDIs are textbook World Bank stuff’ (DTI 1998).

Officially the SDIs and corridors are said to contribute to macro-regional economic integration in the SADC region and other forms of economic macro-regional integration and cooperation. They are also assumed to enhance the beneficial integration into the world economy (i.e. globalization). It is evident that SADC has tried to capitalize on the momentum around the SDIs and the transport corridor paradigm. SADC officials claim that development corridors are part of ‘SADC’s way of doing things’, thereby constituting crucial components of the fostering of macro-regional economic integration (interview, Division of Multilateral Economic Relations, SADC Affairs, Mozambique, 5 March, 1999). Yet, at least until recently we have witnessed a rather uneasy relationship between micro-regionalism and macro-regionalism. For South Africa — who has tried to export its own national SDI and corridor concept to Eastern and Southern Africa — these projects were alternative constructions to SADC. It is particularly significant that South African promoters of the SDIs and development corridors tried to prevent the micro-regional projects from being associated – in their language ‘hijacked’ – by the ineffectiveness and ‘politics’ of SADC, as stated by an official in the Foreign Ministry of South Africa (interview, October 1999). Even if the Mozambican actors involved in micro-regionalism in Southern Africa are not as polemical, linkages with SADC rarely extend beyond mere rhetoric. Thus, the case of the MDC and the other projects in Southern Africa suggest that micro-regions

and broader macro-regions are rather uneasy bedfellows, which may hold within them both powerful contradictions and the potential for destabilization of any wider macro-regional ‘vision’. However, there is evidence that this competition between the macro-region (SADC) and the different micro-regional projects has started to change. Several representatives of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) — which is the coordinating hub for the South African as well as the Southern African SDIs and corridors — state that they have changed their strategy: ‘We have learnt the lesson. It is neither efficient nor viable to try to circumvent SADC and the other intergovernmental macro-regional organizations. We need to work with these regional organizations, not against them. And they provide the necessary political leverage to make our micro-regional initiatives work’ (interview, November 2016). This change represents a foundational change in the way micro-regional projects are conceptualized and managed in regards to macro-regional frameworks.

East and Southeast Asia

No consensus exists for a definition of the East and Southeast Asian region. The meaning of regionalism has changed in relation to questions of what macro-regions and sub-regions should be included or excluded, what dimensions of regionalism should be investigated (such as security, economics, politics or identity) and what particular theoretical perspectives should be employed. During recent decades, an important part of the debate about regionalism in East and Southeast Asia has focused on collective identity formation and informal or ‘soft’ regionalism (Acharya 2001; Katzenstein 2005). This scholarship seeks to account for the non-legalistic style of decision-making that predominates in this region, and the fact that there has been little transfer of national sovereignty to a supranational authority. It is emphasized that East and Southeast Asian regionalism is characterized by a dense network of informal gatherings, working groups and advisory groups, particularly within ASEAN, but also in a range of other diverse frameworks and groupings, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan and the Republic of Korea), ASEAN Plus Four/Five/Six (Australia, New Zealand and India), Mekong River Basin Commission and the Asian Development Bank, and so forth. This informal style of decision-making incorporates its own innate code of conduct that is often referred to as the ‘ASEAN Way’ (or ‘soft institutionalism’). In contrast to European- and North American-style formal bureaucratic structures and legalistic decision-making procedures, the ‘soft institutionalism’ and the ‘ASEAN Way’ are built around discreetness, informality, pragmatism, consensus-building and non-confrontational bargaining styles (Acharya 1997: 329; Katzenstein 2005). To some extent, the

code of conduct reflects the illiberal underpinnings of the ‘Asian values’ construct, which stresses a communitarian ethic (‘society over the self’) (Acharya 2002: 27-8). This means that there is a considerable emphasis on cultural factors when explaining the regionalism in East and Southeast Asia (and its differences to European integration). Even if there is much discussion about the ASEAN Way and alternative interpretations, this situation reveals the difficulty in taking the region as ‘given’ and also the limitations of focusing on one particular regional scale and one particular regional policy framework. Even if ASEAN is of great importance, as mentioned above, there are several other (partly intersecting) policy frameworks at various scales.

There are a range of micro-regional projects and processes in East and Southeast Asia, such as growth triangles, growth polygons, growth areas, regional production networks and export processing zones. Growth triangles have received a lot of attention in both research and policy. Since the 1990s, growth triangles have been seen as a driving force for economic growth in the Southeast Asian economies. Examples include the Southern Growth Triangle, also known as SIJORI (Singapore, the Johore province of Malaysia, and Riau province of Indonesia), the growth triangle of southern Thailand-northern Sumatra-northern Malaysia, and the ASEAN Growth Triangle covering the Sarawak-Brunei-Sabah area. Growth triangles use the different endowments of the participating countries, exploiting cooperative trade for production and development opportunities. These initiatives are constructed around partnerships between the private sector and the state, which explains why they have been referred to as a form of ‘trans-state development’ (Parsonage 1997). In these partnerships, the private sector provides capital for investment whereas the public sector provides infrastructure, fiscal incentives, and the administrative framework to attract industry and investment. Growth triangles are interesting from the perspective of intersecting scales of regionalism, not least since there are a series of interpretations of the nature of these linkages.

Some scholars have drawn attention to a competitive relationship between the effort to build a macro-regional economic market and specific micro-regional frameworks. For instance, Landingin and Wadley (2005: 88-9) have suggested that certain of ASEAN’s assistance packages, such as tax exemptions in export processing zones, that are aimed at strengthening specific micro-regions and export processing zones actually distort the macro-region. Growth triangles have also been described as a way to achieve regional economic integration while avoiding a time-consuming macro-regional political bureaucracy promoted by ASEAN (Öjendal 2001: 160).

The growth triangles have also been described as complementary to macro-regional economic integration and as paving the way for macro-regionalism (Öjendal 2001: 160). In fact, ASEAN has tried to capitalize upon and internalize the momentum around the growth triangles and the

cross-border growth areas, claiming these as part of the ‘ASEAN way’. For instance, as early as in 1992 ASEAN formally ‘adopted’ the idea of growth triangles, outlined a legal and economic framework for them and also stated that they should be seen as complementary to broader macro-regional economic integration and the ASEAN free trade area (Öjendal 2001: 160; Parsonage 1997: 273). A growing amount of literature shows that the economically-oriented micro-regions have enjoyed some stability imparted by the more politically oriented sub-regional and macro-regional frameworks, especially ASEAN (Klecha-Tylec 2017: 118). Yet, much of the more recent literature goes beyond the question of competition versus complementarity and focus on the diversity of interactions of various forms of micro-, sub- and macro-regionalisms in East and Southeast Asia (Nadalutti 2015; Klecha-Tylec 2017; also see Chen in this volume).

The micro-regional phenomenon is more diverse than growth triangles, East and Southeast Asia is also shaped by a variety of regional production and inter-firm networks that are predominantly shaped by business actors, many of which depend on cultural and social relations, such as the Chinese *guanxi* or cultural links in the Greater Pearl Delta River (Klecha-Tylec 2017: 118). Other micro-regional entities emerge as a result of spatial development of cities and industrial areas that spread to neighbouring micro-regions (so called ‘transborder metropolitan spillover’). As illustrated by the Greater Tumen Initiative and the Greater Mekong Subregion, micro-regional and sub-regional initiatives can also be designed to manage infrastructure projects (e.g. hydropower and energy projects) and common transborder resources (e.g. rivers and waters) (Klecha-Tylec 2017: 118). Cooperation within these and similar frameworks depend increasingly on diplomatic and political inter-state frameworks at ‘higher’ levels (Klecha-Tylec 2017: 324; cf. ADB 2013). Nevertheless, the pluralism and diversity of policy frameworks emerging at all scales and levels (micro-regional, sub-regional and macro-regional) in East and Southeast Asia preclude linear or easily defined developments. Klech-Tylec (2017) emphasizes the need for a comprehensive new regionalist approach in order to comprehend that East Asian regionalism is shaped through network, zonal, and geospatial dimensions of relations as they apply at micro-regional, sub-regional, macro-regional, trans-regional and inter-regional levels (Klech-Tylec 2017).

Conclusion

The point of departure of this chapter is that the links between micro-regions and macro-regions have often been weakly conceptualized and understood. A large part of previous literature has ignored the links, wrongly assuming that micro-regions and macro-regions isolated form one another. In those cases when scholars have acknowledged the links, most studies have

concentrated on whether macro-regions and micro-regions are competitive or complementary. An example of the former, when the South African policy makers tried to design the development corridors and Spatial development initiatives in Southern Africa as an alternative integration model to SADC integration, which was believed to be too bureaucratic and over-politicized. Gradually, however, the South African attitude has changed, and today's South African representatives claim that the micro-regional initiatives depend on the political leverage provided by the macro-regional frameworks.

There are several forms of complementarity. Complementarity implies a mutually reinforcing relationship, whereby either micro-regionalism or macro-regionalism gives rise to, proceeds through, requires, or opens up space for the other. One may, therefore, distinguish between 'top-down' complementarity, whereby micro-regions develop or at least benefit from a macro-regional framework (for instance due to spatial organization of production, due to regional public goods, institutions or cohesion policy), and 'bottom-up' complementarity, which implies that cross-border micro-regions contributes to macro-regions (for instance through border integration or growth triangles).

This chapter draws attention to that regions are social constructs, which implies that they are often heterogeneous and with fuzzy borders. Approaching regions in this way forces us to look beyond one-dimensional distinctions such as competition and complementarity. Rather than being fixed constructs, regions are often constructed by a variety of state and non-state actors, both within and outside formal regional institutional arrangements and at various scales. Any attempt to understand these heterogeneous processes requires a problematization of 'space', which moves beyond methodological nationalism and the conventional preoccupation with 'national' scale and space prevailing in mainstream IR theory. A focus on regional space, instead of states-led regional organizations still is rare in the study of regions, at least within mainstream IR. 'Few are the works that seriously challenge the convenient practice of relying of spaces that are either formally predefined by regional organizations and treaties or tangible in terms of material flows' (Mattheis 2014: 63). The fundamental methodological problem concerns the prevalent view of regional space as just another 'container', with predefined views about inside/outside and how regions 'become regions'.

One may, of course, continue to identify 'regions' as 'given' and defined in advance of research, but as soon as we move away from one-dimensional and hermetically sealed understandings of social space; then the region automatically becomes more fluid, porous and heterogeneous, with a range of regional actor and region-builders. This necessarily implies that

it becomes more difficult to uphold clear distinctions between micro-regions and macro-regions, and their interaction extends far beyond neatly defined competition versus complementarity. An increasing number of studies in the field indicate that no single regional scale is dominant and emphasize a pluralism of regional processes and spaces (i.e. mega-regions, macro-regions, sub-regions and micro-regions). The empirical illustrations in this chapter have tried to illuminate both the competition-complementarity issue but also some of the more complex ways whereby macro-regions and micro-regions interact and intersect in Africa and Asia. The analytical framework is key for understanding the proliferation of discursively constituted and institutionally materialized strategies and how a variety of state and non-state actors come together to construct a patchwork of intersecting and overlapping regions at various spatial scales. Given that all regions are political and social projects, they are not only material but also exist in imaginations. Arising from this, what exactly a region should be is 'permanently disputed by competing perceptions of political actors' (Mattheis 2014: 66). It follows that region-building is not a harmonious process; both integration and disintegration are part of it.

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