

Chapter 1

Bringing Agency (Back) into African Regionalism

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Since its inception 60 years ago, the success of European regional integration as the role model of regionalism is crumbling considerably: Not only is the future of the Euro uncertain, but also the future of the development of the European Union (EU) itself. But while the European financial crisis has fundamentally developed into a 'regionalism crisis', this does not seem to be the case for regionalisms on other continents where, instead, we witness a strengthening of regional organizations, regional economic integration and a shift towards regional problem solving. This especially holds true for Sub-Saharan Africa where regionalisms have experienced an upsurge in recent years.

Both developments form the main concern of this volume: to provide an African perspective on agency in African regionalisms. Although regionalism has developed into a global phenomenon, it is still treated as being the model of regional integration promoted by the EU, whose institutional designs and norms have been adopted by other regional organizations as part of a 'downloading process'. Through this Eurocentric lens, organizations other than the EU stand at the 'receiving end' with a rather blurred sight of the true vertical, as well as horizontal, interactions of a multiplicity of actors. Inactivity – and even inability – is often ascribed to processes of regionalisms in Sub-Saharan Africa and, some notable exceptions notwithstanding (Söderbaum 2004, Söderbaum and Taylor 2008), research still lacks empirical insights that allow moving beyond these stereotypes.

The focus on agency serves as a heuristic device in order to overcome one-sided analyses of regionalisms in Africa. Although it has almost been ten years since Neumann (2003) identified the question about agency in region-building as a blind spot in earlier studies on regions, thorough knowledge of the question of 'who' still remains incomplete. This volume thus places the starting point of analysis within the geographical space of Sub-Saharan Africa. Following this approach, external agency is by no means excluded a priori, but rather mapped according to its actual influence on the spot. Accordingly, in line with the theoretical reasoning of the New Regionalism Approach (NRA), both state and non-state actors are considered as well as both formal and informal spheres of action.

All the chapters in this volume highlight distinct actors and actor constellations and minimize or even ignore others altogether. Thus, the volume does not claim

to provide a comprehensive account of agency of a particular group's influence on the processes of regionalism in Africa. Rather, it presents a selection of recent research on this issue that paves the way for a more thorough understanding of the dynamics, specifics and varieties of African regionalisms. Not least, by covering different regions – southern Africa, east Africa and West Africa – as well as the different policy fields of security, trade and resource management, this volume allows for highly insightful comparisons in spatial as well as in topical aspects.

The remainder of the introduction is structured along three main sections. The first section puts agency of African regionalism in a (truly) historical perspective. The second section discusses the concept of agency and what we would call the 'agency approach' in more detail. The last section outlines the structure of the book and presents some conclusions drawn from a comparative view on the individual chapters.

African Regionalism in a Historical Perspective

Generally speaking, political scientists frame the global history of formal regionalisms in two waves: a beginning in the 1960s with the European Economic Community as the institutional role model, where states are main actors and with economic integration as the predominant issue. In contrast, the second wave following the end of the Cold War includes a variety of actors, bears different formal as well as informal regional settings and is prone to various policy fields, even if economic issues are still predominant. This periodization evolved from the NRA even if some early theoretical reasoning on this approach related the newness rather more epistemologically than empirically to the regionalisms (Grant and Söderbaum 2003). Today, however, it is taken for granted that contemporary regionalisms, not the least in Africa, take novel forms and patterns (Shaw, Grant and Cornelissen 2011, Iheduru 2011).

A closer look at the history of African regionalisms since 1945 may challenge this opposing periodization to some extent. 'Old' and 'new' African regionalisms share more commonalities than differences. While NRA has indeed a lot to offer as an approach by requesting a more complex analysis of region-building and its fragmentation, it is relatively insensitive to the historical dimensions of such developments. NRA was right in claiming that research on regionalisms was, for a long time, Eurocentric and state-centric; however, it did not go further than this judgement and it lacks thorough consideration of actual historical developments.

At this point, recent historiographical trends from European integration history (EIH) might be helpful: Traditionally, EIH was *domaine réservé* of diplomatic history. Analogous to political science literature, research focused exclusively on states, governments, national interests or diplomatic negotiations. In recent years, however, this narrow focus was widened by transnational approaches towards European integration history. One part of this literature highlights transnational party networks, epistemic communities of experts and NGOs that emerged from

the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Kaiser and Meyer 2013, Kaiser 2009). Other historians have recently challenged the endogenous focus of EIH (Garavini 2012), and Patel (2013) explicitly argues for the provincialization of the EU and a systematic contextualization of this supposed role model into the broader environment of European regionalisms and global institutions. These new approaches bear a lot of evidence for the argument that from the beginning the European integration process was also shaped by non-state actors. Moreover,, regional policy-making occurred in organizational settings that were much less formalized compared with the EEC institutions. Thus, a great deal of European integration history has come under reconsideration in recent years by historians who in some respect share the theoretical reasoning of the NRA.

Certainly, Africa is not Europe. This not only holds true for history but also for historiography: African regionalism is not a topic that historians have so far rated highly. Nonetheless, general historical research on Africa also provides some insights for mapping agency and forms of African regionalisms since 1945. After the Second World War, the so-called second colonial occupation of Africa by European powers not only marked the beginning of the 'development era' (Cooper 2002) but also brought about some regional dynamics in Africa, which still leave their mark on African regionalism. For example, the Union française (1946–58) was an ambitious attempt by France to organize its African colonies in an imperial Euro-African setting alongside the two federations of French West and French Equatorial Africa (Cooper 2005). The East African High Commission (1947–1961), comprising Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, was founded by Great Britain as an inter-territorial organization and in many ways shaped the subsequent regionalization process in East Africa (Doimi di Delupis 1970, Braveboy-Wagner 2009).

At the same time, Pan-Africanist visions loomed large and grew alongside the decolonization process. After 1945, Pan-Africanism turned from a loosely organized protest movement of the Black diaspora into a vital political project that fought for the overcoming of colonial rule and the unification of the continent (Bujra 2002). This kind of 'colonial regionalism' fostered the establishment of parties, trade unions and youth organizations on a regional level (Chafer 2002). Moreover, educational institutions (Eckert 2000), aviation organizations (Mndeme Musonda 2004), currency issues (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1982, Rowan 1954) and many more political tasks were geared towards 'regional' spaces. These developments involved external and African actors, (colonial) state and non-state actors, and even bore rather informal socio-economic phenomena of regionalization.

Given this multi-faceted picture of 'colonial regionalism', it does not seem plausible that once Africa had turned into a world of sovereign nation-states, African governments would have succeeded in monopolizing regional matters until the end of the Cold War. Despite their pre-eminent agency, African governments were by far not the only drivers of or obstacles to regionalism efforts between 1960 and 1990. First of all, external agency continued to shape African

regionalisms in many ways. This holds true for foreign state intervention as well as for non-African international organizations. Both influenced the reorganization of the continent's regional (dis)order in the formative independence years and were sometimes jointly responsible for institutional overlaps. For instance, France was the most important enemy of integration efforts transcending old colonial borders in western Africa, whereas the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had a crucial impact on the formation process of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Rempe and Schneider 2009). Likewise, in its formative years, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was a favoured target of various international organizations trying to gain a foothold in African regional matters (Wallerstein 1966). All these historical snapshots show that the history of African regionalism is as much a history of 'extraversion' (Bayart 2000) as is the general history of Africa, and most of the chapters in this volume acknowledge that even today, African regionalisms are for better or for worse affected by the structural condition of external intervention.

Second, other non-state actors such as the African Trade Union Confederation organized regionally and tried to make their voices heard. In the early independence years, the OAU absorbed some organizations, such as the Commission of African Jurists or the Pan-African Union of Journalists (Wallerstein 1966). To be sure, these groupings did not have influencing formal economic regionalisms as their primary aim. Still, they represented transnational institutions bringing together societal actors for distinct regional purposes. What is more, many of the non-state actors under NRA scrutiny are not linked to formal regionalisms either and, as Godsäter shows in this volume, those who are often suffer from marginalization.

Generally, it is worth remembering in this context that the existence per se of civil society organizations is by no means a novel phenomenon of the post-Cold War era (Rosenau 1992). From a global perspective, the 1970s had yielded a burst of non-governmental organizations (NGO), and Africa followed this trend: in 1977, around 7,000 local and international NGOs were active on the continent (Iriye 2004: 133). Even if their number has once again considerably increased (thanks to massive funding by development aid), the 'new' focus on civil society primarily reflects changes in political development discourse and practise as well as in academic trends (Ferguson 2003); it reveals however little about the involvement of societal actors in formal or informal regional projects before 1990.

It becomes clear that the issue of non-state agency in African regionalisms cannot be separated from the question of which forms of regional developments should be addressed – and which ones should be left out. NRA is quite generous in this respect, addressing macro-, meso- and micro-regionalisms, and formal as well as informal ones (Shaw, Grant and Cornelissen 2011). However, because regions are not preordained but socially constructed, as the result of historical development, at least some of these 'new' forms of regionalisms must be put into historical perspective. To give but two examples, export processing zones popped up on the African continent as early as in the 1970s (Rempe 2012, Fröbel, Heinrich

and Kreye 1977), and river organizations can even be traced back to colonial times (Tischler 2011, Kipping and Lindemann 2005).

What is more, also the structural problems and challenges of (formal) African regionalisms have not changed fundamentally over the past 60 years (Asante and Chanaiwa 1993: 730): they include the struggle for national consolidation and integration (Grant et al. in this volume) and hence a lower priority of implementing regional cooperation; tensions between pan-African visions and regional solutions (Sicurelli, Welz in this volume); economic and political heterogeneity resulting in different preferences for regionalism schemes (Lorenz in this volume); and strong interference of external actors (Malito and Ylönen, Muntschick in this volume).

To be very clear, it is neither argued that nothing has changed in Africa since independence, nor that NRA has nothing to offer. Quite the contrary, in highlighting the incremental historical trajectories of African regionalisms (as against the opposing wave model), several epistemological arguments of NRA are underscored. Not only the need for a more pluralistic perspective on agency, including external as well as non-state actors, but also the necessity of addressing more informal dynamics of regionalisms can be deduced from historical developments. Perhaps more importantly, their acknowledgement can secure contemporary analysis from the normative judgements that are all too often connected with a discourse of newness. Put together with the persistent structural challenges of African regionalism, historical consciousness of the difficulties and many failures of formal and informal regionalisms in Africa doubtlessly facilitate a critical, non-normative and down-to-earth approach to these issues. Thus a stronger emphasis on historical dimensions speaks to the overall concern of NRA, not least since such pleas have already implicitly been raised by its proponents (Söderbaum 2011: 63, Söderbaum 2003). Given the poor current state of genuine historical research on African regionalisms, implementation of this call for interdisciplinary reasoning is fairly challenging. Hence, this volume and its chapters are a first step, and it is to be hoped they will enhance the debate on the usefulness of historical contextualization for understanding contemporary African regionalisms.

Mapping Agency in Contemporary African Regionalisms

Clearly, 'the region' has again gained prominence in social science research. The quotation marks already signify its problematic conceptualization on which little consensus exists within and between disciplines and theoretical schools. As Paasi (2004: 539) has aptly pointed out, regions function as epistemologies and become a way of 'knowing the world', and three different approaches of regionalism can be differentiated that each emphasize different characteristics. First, economic regionalism understands regions as trade blocks along a sequential model of regional economic integration. Second, political regionalism in its earlier phase focused on regional organizations and state-led processes in contrast

to NRA, which argues for a focus on both state and non-state actors. Another divide within political regionalism is to be found between European integration scholars and international relations (IR) scholars, although this differentiation has recently been called into question by scholars from both camps (Hettne and Söderbaum 2008, Warleigh-Lack et al. 2011). Critical political geography, as a third approach, has equally called into question the conventional IR thinking that regions are based on states as mutually exclusive and fixed units of sovereign spaces. It has also questioned the a-spatial framing of global processes and in contrast argues for a deconstruction of spatial logics as part of ongoing processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Giddens 1990, Tuathail and Luke 1994, Brenner 1999).

Regarding agency, these three strands share a limitation that has only recently been pinpointed in relation to the global context (Finnemore et al. 2010) and ask a seemingly obvious but still rather neglected question about 'who governs the globe'. Not only with the advent of the last wave of globalization since the 1970s (Osterhammel and Petersson 2005) have states been comprised of a multiplicity of distinct groups but within the globalizing context, policy-making processes have become increasingly complex and led to an expansion of both government bureaucracy as well as of the numbers of groups involved. On the one hand, the currently dominant analytical focus is on the structural and process-oriented composition of global governance that leaves the 'global governors' with a rather passive voice. On the other hand, US-dominated IR research is still caught in what Agnew (1994: 53) has termed the territorial trap when equalling those governors with states: even though political practices require territorial anchorage, the processes set in motion through such practices are not necessarily linked to states as 'containers of society' or even territorially fixed and no longer fall along a binary divide of domestic/foreign, east/west or real/imagined.

Together with the emergence of new actors and the transforming roles of traditional actors in the context of globalization, new coalitions have developed. While early studies expected the primacy of capitalist formations as part of globalization as a predominantly economic phenomenon, the trend has developed towards treating globalization as multiple parallel political processes leading to more complex 'pecking orders' (Cerny 2010: 111). This trend has been accompanied by a turn towards actor networks as the appropriate conceptualization of interactions and knowledge flows, and it is within such actor networks where regional orders are negotiated.

Indeed, the 'global policy arena is filled with a wide variety of actors – international organizations, corporations, professional associations, advocacy groups and the like' (Finnemore 2010: 1) and the very same is to be expected at a regional level. The question here is whether we expect a replication of actor scenarios or distinctive 'regional' constellations (Lorenz 2011). In addition, we would argue that in order to tap into the 'actor constellations', one not only needs to answer the question of 'who' but also the question of 'through which interactions'.

We thus use the concept of agency as an 'analytical category on its own right' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 970), openly defined as temporally constructed interplay of actors which (re-) produces and transforms processes and structures through interactive response to problems related to regional matters. Here, our conceptualization of agency concurs with Ernst Haas's argument that the question of who constitutes a relevant actor can and should not be answered a priori (Haas 1964; Latour 2005). The challenge for each chapter is to map these interplays in their manifold forms and to make visible the parts of the mosaic that can be called 'African regionalisms'.

Comparing African Regionalisms: The Structure of the Book

The volume is structured in three parts which address developments in Sub-Saharan Africa that are both key 'at present but that have also been central in a historical perspective: the first part covers security issues, the second one addresses economic regionalisms and the last section focuses on actors below the radar. A concluding *tour d'horizon* by Timothy Shaw outlines future challenges of African regionalisms and research perspectives. We have deliberately abstained from a structure along a geographical order and have opted for an issue-specific comparison with respect to different parts of Africa as well as to different levels, that is to say national, regional and continental. While the *tertium comparationis* of the first two parts can be easily grasped – security and economic integration – the third section focuses on a rather less straightforward issue. These actors below the radar, Ghanaian migrant workers (Grant), Tanzanian informal traders (Nixdorf) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in Southern Africa (Godsäter), have little in common except their marginalization by academic research and current (micro-) regional developments. However, this section not only highlights various non-state actors' agency but also allows for a comparative view on the socio-economic effects of African regionalisms and societal reactions to them. Hence, this part is most closely connected to NRA as well as it documents the need for further in-depth research on regionalisms' societal repercussions in order to make more systematic comparisons possible in the future.

In a broad sense, the two chapters in the security section investigate the reach and limits of the slogan 'African solutions to African problems'. Even if this slogan is closely related to the foundation of the African Union in 2002, the fundamental idea of African self-reliance and its link to regional organization-building has been promoted at least since the 1970s (Adedeji 1993). In her chapter on the emerging security culture of the African Union, Daniela Sicurelli maps African agency adapting and reacting to different external security models: the responsibility to protect, most prominently promoted by the European Union on the one hand, and the idea of non-intervention, closely connected to the practise of the former OAU and China, on the other. She argues that these competing models increase the

scope of action of AU leaders and, to some extent, constrain the normative power of the EU despite its much bigger financial engagement.

Debora Valentina Malito and Aleksis Ylönen explore the impact of external agency on the peace processes in Sudan and Somalia, which were controlled by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). They show that both processes were highly influenced by the US government's foreign policy and the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT). By using the IGAD as a regional docking station, the US successfully disguised self-interested intervention and at the same time weakened the authority's regional function to grapple with these conflicts.

From both chapters, it becomes clear that external agency still considerably affects security issues at different levels that range from wielding normative power on the African Union (AU) to bypassing the role of the IGAD. Interestingly enough, in mapping agency on the spot, the authors challenge conventional wisdom, albeit in diverse directions. While Sicurelli qualifies the EU's impact and highlights African agency and China's role, Malito and Ylönen correct the representation of the peace processes in the Horn of Africa as outcomes of genuine regional security-building. As contradictory as these findings may be at first glance, they can be explained by different levels of external interference: adapting to and actively appropriating normative power is easier than reacting to or even resisting powerful intervention.

The second section is dedicated to formal economic regionalisms. Once again, topics such as regional integration in the East African Community (EAC) and the negotiations of trade agreements between different African groupings and the EU share a long history. Ulrike Lorenz-Carl compares the negotiation processes of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) EPA grouping and the EAC EPA grouping with the EU. She argues that differences in the outcomes of the negotiation processes can be explained by regional and domestic dynamics rather than by taking the EU's role as *explanans*. In contrast, Johannes Muntschick, in his chapter on the EU's impact on SADC and SACU, highlights the economic attractiveness of the European Union as primary explanatory factor for the incongruity between negotiation groupings and existing regional organizations in southern Africa. According to him, many countries in this region expect better economic pay-offs by EPAs than by the envisaged SADC customs union. Both chapters represent an argumentative strand in the lively discussion on the future of economic integration in Sub-Saharan Africa that has re-emerged with the EPA negotiations.

Adding to this discussion, Martin Welz focuses exclusively on Uganda and its president and scrutinizes Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's motives behind his policy towards the EAC. He shows that while economic and trade imperatives force the east African country on the road to intensified regionalism, there are also Museveni's personal ambitions of becoming the president of the envisaged East African Federation to take into account when examining the country's strong preference for regional integration.

All three contributions show the multiplicity of actors in regional economic integration beyond regional organizations. As in the case of the first part, external actors still play a role. However, regional dynamics as well as individual leaders provide equally important explanations for regionalisms in which the EU might lately have less influence than originally anticipated.

Finally, the chapters of the third section focus on 'actors below the radar'. Andréas Godsäter sheds light on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in southern Africa and their complex relationship to the SADC. While his findings suggest a general dynamic of regionalization in the realm of civil society, Godsäter identifies two different mechanisms that shape this development: on the one hand, CSO regionalization takes place in accord with the political orientation of the SADC. Moreover, those CSOs which share the SADC's 'neoliberalist agenda', as Godsäter puts it, at least to some extent succeed in contributing to regional policy-making. On the other hand, it is just the SADC's intentional marginalization of rather sceptical CSOs which trigger their regionalization efforts in order to make their voice heard.

In contrast, Lisa Nixdorf maps effects of formal economic regionalism on a different level. In her micro case study on informal cross-border trade (ICBT) in the Tanzanian Tarime District bordering on Kenya, she identifies three factors that can explain why ICBT of small-scale actors continues despite deepened formal integration steps of the EAC: lack of implementation by the member states; imperfect information on the micro-traders' side; and corrupt structures within the customs staff, who take advantage of the traders' ignorance. Thus micro-traders neither profit from economic integration nor act as agents of regional integration. Rather, as Nixdorf argues, such detrimental circumstances contribute to an increasing sceptical stance by ICBT traders towards the EAC.

In pushing the 'informal' and micro-level dimension even further, J. Andrew Grant, Matthew I. Mitchell, Frank K. Nyame and Natalia Yakovleva seek to retrace the relationship between Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and migration in three sectors of the Ghanaian economy in order to map the benefits and constraints of what could be called 'communicative regionalism'. They show that while the influence of ICT on migration within the diamond and cocoa economy remains marginal, the spread of cellular communication and – to a much lesser extent – of internet technology considerably spurred migration flows within the gold sector. What is more, the authors' findings confirm a constant of technology history according to which the introduction of new technologies produces winners as well as losers and causes unintended consequences. Thus the increase of local agency triggered by ICT sometimes runs counter to governance measures and the overall target of economic development.

A comparative view on these diverse 'actors below the radar' in different parts of Africa allows for some conclusions and at the same time raises further questions. First of all, the three accounts in general make it evident that regions cannot be built or be damaged from above alone but emerge or become fragmented as much from below. Second, the socio-political and economic effects of regionalism

seem to remain rather marginal: while CSOs in southern Africa still have to struggle with nationalism within their organizations, the effects of regionalization are not felt at all among Tanzanian small traders or workers in the different Ghanaian economy sectors. The latter chapter is especially a case in point for the fugitiveness of 'regions' since, as the authors show, societies are prone to so many other – and often more important – developments than regionalism. Thus the focus on 'actors below the radar' calls for further in-depth analysis on formal as well as informal regionalisms' extent, intensity, repercussions and effects in Africans' everyday life in order to grasp the actual socio-economic significance of regionalisms in Africa.

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