

# New Regionalism and the European Union

Dialogues, comparisons and new research directions

*Edited by*  
**Alex Warleigh-Lack,**  
**Nick Robinson and**  
**Ben Rosamund**



Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science

# New Regionalism and the European Union

The debates on regionalism have been polarized between European Union (EU) scholars and non-EU scholars, with the assumption being that regionalism within the EU and other regions of the world are quite distinct, with little to be learnt from dialogue with each other. This book challenges such assumptions and calls for a genuine debate between scholars of regionalism.

This book demonstrates that more can and needs to be learned about regional integration all over the world through comparison and reflection on specific regional trends. Beginning with a theoretically driven introduction, leading experts in the field are brought together to offer a series of case studies on regional integration within Latin America, Africa, Asia, North America and Europe. In Part III the authors investigate the links between the EU and selected other regional organizations and processes, exploring the dynamics through which these interregional relations are developing and the implications they have for the study of contemporary regionalism/regionalization both inside and beyond the continent of Europe. The conclusions set out a challenging research agenda for comparative studies in the field.

Addressing one of the under-explored aspects of EU studies, the EU's coexistence with other pan-continental/regional organizations in the European continent, this book will be of interest to students and scholars of regionalism, IPE, European Studies and international politics.

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**AW-L: To Christopher, again and always; and for  
Elly (but not Jennifer)**

**NR: To my family – Jo, Justin and Ella**

**BR: To the memory of E. A.**

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## Series editor's preface

When scholars want to identify important watersheds in political development they sometimes fall victim to the symbolic attractiveness of a single event. This is why the fall of the Berlin Wall has come to be regarded as the moment when the Eastern Bloc collapsed, even though East Germany was a latecomer in the process of democratic transition. Similarly, it may be overstating the point somewhat that the Single European Act 'sparked a process of "new regionalism" across the globe' (Chapter 1 below). Yet it is undeniable that it represented a major qualitative shift in the process of European integration, which had a profound impact on developments elsewhere, not least due to the sheer weight of the economic power that was given a partially new framework. Arguably, the acceleration of European integration set the example for processes of regional integration elsewhere acting as an – albeit limited – antidote to neoliberal globalization.

New regionalism is seen as a qualitatively new phenomenon that represented a departure from the old regionalism motivated by economic and security objectives. It is conceptualized as a complex multidimensional phenomenon that involves state and non-state actors and is intimately related to the forces of globalisation. To be sure, there is considerable disunity concerning the definition of the concept of 'regional integration' and the editors are well advised to use a fairly inclusive conceptualization for a volume such as this when they write in their introductory chapter that regional integration refers to the 'collaborative construction of a new political structure, which reduces . . . the political autonomy of participating states'.

The advantage of such new structures is, presumably, that they generate an increased capacity to deal with important problems that nation states – going it alone – would find difficult to cope with. At the same time, however, this comes with a price, and this price is substantial. Arguably, effective solutions require structures that constrain or even erode national sovereignty, and this is virtually synonymous with a challenge to democracy. However, this is only one aspect of regionalism as regional integration can also lead to the strengthening of subnational units, as the example of the EU exemplifies. The strengthening of 'micro-regions' has resulted in a gain of democratic accountability, at least seen from the perspective of those identifying with a specific subnational unit, as many regions within the EU have gained self-governing competencies in a dialectic process,

leading to supranational integration and increased subnational autonomy at the same time.

However, this example highlights that the EU may not be a suitable comparator for the analysis of new regionalism because it has evolved, as many argue, into a political system in its own right with a very high degree of integration and transfer of sovereignty. Scholarship on new regionalism and on the EU is characterized by a difficult relationship. There is an important strand within the research community of EU scholars who prefer to regard the EU multi-level system of governance as a political system *sui generis*. If this is true, does it exclude any meaningful comparison with other systems of regional integration? Does it imply that the EU should not be used as a point of reference according to which other systems of regional integration are measured – and, inevitably, look less advanced? Not necessarily, and the current volume seeks to deal with this issue as well as with a range of other aspects of regional integration and EU scholarship.

One of the major conclusions of this volume is that any *a priori* assumption about what can be compared and what cannot is essentially flawed. Nick Robinson and Alex Warleigh-Lack conclude that the EU is a suitable comparator in the analysis of new regionalism. After all, whether or not comparison between distinct objects is meaningful should depend not on *a priori* assumptions about the degree of similarity or difference but on the adequate specification of concepts and analytical tools. Above all, only a meaningful comparison can actually establish whether or not any political structure is so distinct that it justifies the label ‘*sui generis*’.

This volume represents a powerful statement of conceptual openness and demonstrates how different, and sometimes segmented, strands of scholarship can engage in a fruitful discourse as, on closer inspection, apparently distinct phenomena often share comparable mechanisms and inherent logics. As such it is a statement of success that the concluding chapter ends by identifying a range of new research perspectives that are hoped to set the agenda for future projects.

Thomas Poguntke, Series Editor  
Düsseldorf, November 2010

# Preface

This book began in the fevered brain of one of us – AWL – back in 2005. At times he has wished it had stayed there. He was working on the relationship between EU studies, international relations (IR) and new regionalism while employed at the University of Limerick and wanted to propose a workshop to the Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) to be held in Cyprus the following year. Driving rain and constant greyness will do that to a person. Together with Ben Rosamond, he submitted a proposal to the ECPR and was successful. The resulting workshop went incredibly well; those taking part, who represented both EU studies and new regionalism studies, were genuinely interested in learning from each other, and a great *esprit de corps* was established. A follow-up workshop later that year, held at the Institute for International Economic Relations in Athens, introduced other scholars to the project, and all was set fair for the smooth production of an edited volume in the Routledge/ECPR series, should a supportive decision from the series editors be forthcoming.

At this point, life decided to make things difficult. Over the next three years a series of events set the book project back considerably, although many of them were pleasant in their own right – weddings, new jobs, house moves, the birth of children. Many were less happy, involving serious illness and even worse for some of those involved with the project and/or their families. Mafia-type offers that could not be refused, involving the words ‘Head’ and ‘Department’, were also made to at least two of us in this period. During this time, Nick Robinson agreed to join AWL and BR as co-editor of the book, and, thanks to the impetus this gave us, once agreement from the publishers was secured, the book project began in earnest.

Over the last two years, we have moved towards the production of the final manuscript, and now, as we look back on the process, it has been worth it. We have each learned an awful lot about our own approaches to our subject(s), and genuinely feel that in this book we and the contributors have produced something of real value for scholars in the field(s) of regional integration/regionalization studies. It has been a true collaboration, with different editors holding the reins at different periods, undertaken in a genuine spirit of inter(sub)disciplinary collaboration and the wish to learn, exchange and critique ideas and theories between a range of scholars from several disciplines. We hope that our pride is not

misplaced, and that, if it is, we shall at least gain some credit for sheer cussedness and determination.

We would like to thank the ECPR and the Institute for International Economic Relations for their support of the initial workshops, and the contributors for staying a course that was rather longer than anticipated. We would like to thank Harriet Frammingham and her colleagues at Routledge for their patience. And AWL and BR would like to thank NR for his meticulous – metNickulous! – work on the final stages of the MS preparation.

AWL, NR and BR, August 2010.



# Part I

# 1 Introduction

## Regions, regionalism and comparisons

*Alex Warleigh-Lack and Nick Robinson*

### Introduction: the return of regions

The Single European Act, which ushered in the single market of the European Union (EU), did far more than deepen the process of European integration: it also sparked a process of ‘new regionalism’ across the globe. States outside Europe began to construct, or revive, processes of region-building in order both to respond to the economic challenge posed them by the Single European Market and to seize the new freedom of manoeuvre for states which were not ‘superpowers’ that accompanied the end of the Cold War (Fawcett 1995). Even the world’s most powerful country – the United States – has openly taken part in the new regionalism instead of remaining a ‘ghost at the feast’, as it was with the European integration process after the Second World War. By signing up to NAFTA – the North American Free Trade Agreement – Washington sought to protect and promote its economic power and ideology (Deblock and Rioux 1993).

Over what is by now almost three decades, regional organizations and processes have once again become established features of the global political and economic systems; indeed, it has even been argued that much of what appears at first sight to be globalization is actually *regionalization* of trade flows, investment patterns and institutions (Choi and Caporaso 2002). Developing countries have often considered regional organizations and processes as a way to avoid marginalization in global politics, particularly if the end of the Cold War has reduced their perceived strategic value to their erstwhile protectors (Fawcett 1995). Regional organizations have been hailed as potential ‘tamers’ of globalization, serving to dilute its harsher aspects, if they work within an encompassing global institutional framework, complete their burgeoning across yet further areas of the globe, and serve to facilitate political participation by civil society and local governments (Thakur and Van Langenhove 2008). Other observers have gone so far as to maintain that with many regional organizations following the EU in the creation of formal links between regions themselves, as opposed to bilateral relations between their respective member states, a distinct *interregional* component to the multi-layered and still-emerging global political system can be discerned (Doidge 2007).

The flourishing of regions has been noticed not only by scholars of politics and international relations. Lawyers have observed the growth of regional-level

standards, norms and dispute settlement procedures (Duina 2006). Economists and political economists have pointed out that even under conditions of neoliberal globalization, where the ostensible aim is to create as large and unfettered a market as possible, developing a regional economy can generate more trade flows than it diverts; this serves to enrich participating states and reinforce them both economically and politically against third countries (Camilleri 2003; Mansfield and Milner 1999; Schirm 2002). Regionalizing the national economy can even be an alternative to immersion in the broader globalization process, as it increases trade while protecting what may be crucial but vulnerable sectors of the national economy from the dangers of full exposure to the global economy (Gavin and De Lombaerde 2005).

However, making sense of this explosion of regions is still difficult. Despite the common features suggested above, the variety of forms and tasks undertaken by contemporary regions is remarkable. They range from the highly institutionalized European Union to the determinedly informal Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation process. Nor does there appear to be a shared developmental trajectory; regions can start and continue their journeys along rather different paths. Moreover, scholarly communities have tended to be divided in their approach: the relations between EU studies scholars and those of (other aspects of) international relations have often been frosty, and the suitability of the EU and its associated literature for other regions and their studies has been a subject of prolonged debate (for an overview of this EU studies/new regionalism divide, see Warleigh-Lack and Rosamond 2010).

The aim of this book is to facilitate genuine debate across this boundary. Through the input of scholars with expertise on particular global regions, we seek to generate ideas and insights about what is unique to a given region, and what is a common feature of regionalism in the contemporary global political economy. We seek to establish whether, and if so how, there are ways in which scholars and practitioners of regional organizations and/or processes can learn from each other, and maybe even develop a shared framework for analysis. Finally, we seek to establish a promising research agenda for comparative investigations of regional organizations and processes.

The structure of the rest of this chapter is as follows. Immediately below we explain some of the key terms and concepts that will be used in this book, including a discussion of the dependent variable: what *is* a 'region'? The following section briefly explores the reasons for the divide between scholars of 'old' and 'new' regions, and its successor argues for deeper and more sustained comparative studies in the field. The final section guides the reader through the remainder of the volume.

### **Key terms and the dependent variable**

In much social science, terms and concepts are contested, and in this regard the field of regionalism/regional integration is no exception. Hence, we make clear in this section how we use several key terms in this book.

Perhaps the easiest of our key terms to define is ‘regional integration’. To make such a statement is ironic given the difficulty neofunctionalists had with this concept, which they created, and with deciding whether it was a process or end-point, or whether, if the former, only certain kinds of end-point were acceptable indicators of a successful process (see Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). However, Ernst Haas’s definition has been taken as the ultimate expression of the concept:

Regional integration is concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with their neighbours so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflict between themselves.

(Haas 1971: 6)

The emphasis here is on the collaborative construction of a new collective political structure, which effectively (if not necessarily overtly) reduces the national autonomy of participating states, while giving those states in recompense an increased *de facto* capacity to deal with key policy problems. Regional integration was generally considered a suitable term for the ‘first wave’ of regional projects which arose after the end of the Second World War, with the failure of any such processes outside Europe, and ultimately in Europe itself, to match the predictions and aspirations of the neofunctionalists considered by those theorists to sound the death-knell for the concept (Haas 1961, 1975). Integration was considered by neofunctionalists to be a novel phenomenon, a kind of third way between, on the one hand, nation- or state-building processes, which often relied on brute force and/or shared culture, and on the other hand less ambitious orthodox forms of international cooperation, which left the sovereignty of the cooperating states intact.<sup>1</sup>

‘New regionalism’ relates to the second wave of region construction, which, as stated above, began in earnest with the EU’s Single European Act and set off a chain reaction of region-creation and region-reworking across the globe. In new regionalism, or at least new regionalism theory, no division between ‘integration’ and ‘cooperation’ is allowed: both these outcomes, and others besides, are potential aims and outcomes of region construction, and neither is *prima facie* superior or more desirable (see below). Thus, there are several kinds of region and regionalism in the current wave, coexisting with each other and, at least in some cases, dynamically evolving (Marchand *et al.* 1999).

For Björn Hettne, the first and second waves of regionalism have been different in five further key respects, although these have the common underpinning that they reflect changes in the international system and prevailing economic orthodoxy between the 1950s and the present day (Hettne 2002: 326): see Table 1.1.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the diversity of new regionalism, and as suggested by Table 1.1, there is significant difficulty in defining the dependent variable of this book: a ‘region’. There is the obvious confusion between micro-regions, those which exist ‘below’ the level of the state such as provinces or states in federations, and ‘macro-regions’, which exist at the global level and tend to cover either the entire territory or, in the case of cross-border regions, parts of

Table 1.1 Old and new regionalisms

'Old' regionalism	'New' regionalism
Result of bipolar, Cold War international system	Feature of multi-polar, globalized international system
Dependent upon superpower patronage	Dependent on participant state preferences
Economically protectionist	Economically open (neoliberal)
Function-specific	Multi-purpose
Composed of states with (previously) complete sovereignty	Composed of 'porous' states with complex interactions between state and non-state actors

Source: adapted from Hettne (2002).

the territory of several states. In international relations scholarship, the focus has tended to be at the 'macro' level, albeit with increasing focus on the formal and informal links between micro- and macro-regions (see Söderbaum 2009), and this macro-level phenomenon is our focus in the present volume.

To complicate matters further, macro-regions can enter into relations with each other, creating the phenomenon of *interregionalism*. Hettne (2005a: 279) distinguishes between 'trans-regionalism', in which informal processes exist to mediate between different regions, and 'inter-regionalism', in which formal institutions are created to conduct an ongoing process of dialogue and collaboration between regions, such as the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM). In terms of their positions in the international/global system, regions can be 'core', 'intermediate' or 'peripheral' (Hettne 2001). Core regions are those such as Western Europe, East Asia or North America, which are politically strong and economically robust – at least relatively – and whose states enjoy significant control of the world political economy. Intermediate regions are those such as Latin America, which tend to mimic a core region and aim to become part of the core themselves once they have developed sufficiently in economic and political terms. Peripheral regions are those which are 'politically turbulent and economically stagnant' (Hettne 2001: 4), such as the Middle East. There may be one or several regional organizations operating in each of these regions in the global political economy!

How then can we understand what a region is? Is it possible to have an agreed definition? Several scholars have argued that there are no natural regions in international politics – we cannot just apply a geographical definition – and regions are instead 'forged and constructed by the application of different norms, principles, identities and imaginations of the various actors involved' (Wunderlich 2004: 30). Even in an age of globalization, moreover, the local still matters; perhaps we should just accept that regions will continue to differ according to local norms, values and identities (Duina 2006). However, there must somehow be a means of operationalizing the term to find a melody in the semantic cacophony. Stephen Calleya argues that political, social, cultural and trade flows give a *de facto* delimitation of a region (Calleya 1997); a similar case is made by Schulz and

colleagues (2001), who argue scholars should focus on *processes* of regionalization rather than a specific institutional model or a priori definition of region (see also Söderbaum 2009). Other scholars, including one of us, have proposed new definitions intended to bridge the gaps between various scholarly communities in the field (Warleigh-Lack 2006), but as yet none of these has gained general acceptance. What remains to guide research is a further typology developed by Björn Hettne, in which his concept of ‘region-ness’ is elaborated as a means to gain purchase on an otherwise extremely varied, variable and evolving phenomenon.

For Hettne, and his frequent collaborator Fred Söderbaum, region-ness is a fluid concept, a spectrum or process that contains several possibilities, and within which any given region may travel (see Table 1.2). It is ‘the process whereby a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region’ (Hettne and Söderbaum 2000: 461).

These various categories of region-ness are not intended to be hierarchical – none is seen as normatively preferable to others, and any region is considered to be capable of movement along the scale in *both* directions; for instance, a regional state could become a regional community, and a regional complex could become a regional society – or indeed remain a complex, or transform into a regional space. The helpfulness of this typology is enormous: although it cannot give us a single understanding of the dependent variable it does provide an operationalizable understanding of the various possibilities of regions in the current world political economy, and places enough conceptual order onto an inherently contested

Table 1.2 The region-ness continuum

<i>Phase of region-ness</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Regional space	Geographical contiguity, but not necessarily respectful of state borders
Regional complex	Regional space deepened by increased human contacts and transactions, e.g. trade patterns
Regional society	A regional complex made subject to formal transnational rules, in which formal institutions and structures may evolve and in which both state and non-state actors participate in governance
Regional community	A regional society that has developed a collective identity and its own ability to act as a collective, and is recognised as a collective actor by third countries
Region-state	A new, multi-layered organisation that, based on voluntary evolution by its member states, has developed into a novel, heterogeneous form of statehood

Source: adapted from Hettne and Söderbaum (2000: 462–71).

phenomenon for meaningful analysis and comparison of the various regions in the world to be undertaken. In this regard, the lead set over forty years ago by Joseph Nye in a seminal paper (Nye 1968) has been updated. Below we explore why such comparisons could be useful, but first we set out why EU studies and new regionalism have tended to be treated as separate fields of enquiry in order to provide more of the intellectual hinterland.<sup>2</sup>

### **European Union studies vs. the new regionalism: the grounds of division**

As briefly discussed above, there has been a significant divide between scholars of regionalism in the EU and elsewhere. These differences can be meta-theoretical and epistemological, but the most significant of them to date has been that between students of ‘old’ and ‘new’ regionalism. Although this distinction can be exaggerated, it has certainly generated non-trivial differences of perspective that must be taken into account.

The first such difference is pretty fundamental: it speaks to the issue of why regionalism occurs, how it can be explained and what the processes involved are or can be. New regionalism scholars, perhaps particularly those following Hettne and Söderbaum’s New Regionalist Approach (NRA), have argued that the processes and explanations for regionalization are quite different in Europe from elsewhere, with Hettne (2002, 2005b: 545–50) providing a useful summary, highlighting the distinctions between old and new regionalism (a diagrammatic representation of these distinctions is offered in Table 1.1).

Whereas ‘old regionalism’ was centred on Europe and became closely associated with neofunctionalist explanations of regional integration, which described a process in which functional spillovers driven by rational actors (be they within supranational institutions and/or producer groups) would ultimately lead to political integration (Breslin and Higgott 2003: 168),<sup>3</sup> new regionalist scholars have developed a framework to analyse the process of integration outside Europe, which they see as distinctive (Hettne 2005b: 545–7).

First, NRA scholars argue that ‘in order to understand regionalism today it is essential to realise that we are dealing with a qualitatively *new* phenomenon’ (Söderbaum 2005: 234; emphasis in original). Whereas studies of old regionalism focus on a process in which integration stems from internal dynamics, new regionalism points to a combination of external dynamics (in particular globalization) alongside endogenous forces as a principal motor to regionalization (Hettne 2005b: 547–8).

Second, whereas old regionalism was a Cold War phenomenon motivated by both security and economic objectives, new regionalism ‘resulted from a more comprehensive, multidimensional societal process’ in which globalization, global structural transformation and the prevalence of non-state actors are all emphasized (Hettne 2005b: 549). Furthermore, as Bach (1999: 1) argues: ‘Outside Europe, the rebirth of regionalism during the late 1980s often had little to do with the numerous international organisations that were supposed to promote its development’.