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*The New Regionalism Framework -  
An IR Approach to European  
Integration?*

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# The New Regionalism – An Analytical Framework for the Conceptualisation of European Integration?

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1	Introduction.....	2
2	Traditional Approaches to Regionalisation – A Critique.....	3
3	The New Regionalism Approach – A Framework for Analysis.....	8
3.1	The New Regionalism and Social Constructivism.....	10
3.2	The New Regionalism and Governance Approaches.....	14
3.3	The New Regionalism and the Global Structural Transformation Process.....	17
3.3.1	International Order.....	17
3.3.2	The Globalisation Process.....	23
3.4	The Concept of a 'Region'.....	27
4	Conclusion.....	30

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# The New Regionalism – An Analytical Framework for the Conceptualisation of European Integration

Most researchers would agree that European integration has arrived at yet another crucial point in its evolution. Despite this, there is little or no consensus in the field of integration theory. The dichotomy between supranational and intergovernmental approaches still dominates much of the discussion, new advances come from comparative politics rather than international relations and grand theories, such as neofunctionalism, are almost pushed to the sidelines. This paper puts forward the argument that developments in international relations theory may provide a useful tool to overcome some of the weaknesses of traditional integration theory. By linking different analytical levels, the new regionalism provides a framework allowing us to explore how regional organisations such as the EU have evolved and how they work. It combines elements of international relations theory with multilevel governance approaches. Accordingly, the paper is dedicated to revisit the new regionalism and to provide a comprehensive outline of it.

## 1 Introduction

The forces unleashed by the global structural transformation process and globalisation are re-defining the structural and agentive relations between national, regional and global contexts.<sup>1</sup> However, regional images are often based on outdated concepts, which make it necessary to re-examine the theoretical foundations of regionalisation and regionalism. As the example of the European process all too clearly points out, despite the large amount of theoretical work conceptual clarity on the topic of regionalisation has not yet been achieved. To transcend the dilemma represented by the dichotomy of supranational and state-centric approaches is perhaps the greatest intellectual challenge for any student of integration.

‘Integration theory has been in a period of difficult revision for over a decade.’<sup>2</sup> The inadequacy of orthodox approaches such as intergovernmentalism or neofunctionalism has resulted in the emergence of new theories. However, many of

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<sup>1</sup> R. Väyrynen, ‘Regionalism: Old and New’, in: *International Studies Review*, vol. 5, 2003, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> A. Warleigh, *Flexible Integration – Which Model for the European Union*, (London, Sheffield University Press, 2002), p. 17.

these new approaches tend to be drawing on comparative politics rather than on international relations. Examples are the wide variety of multilevel governance and even network approaches. However, these approaches focus on particular features of the European process, leaving little room for more holistic understandings.

At the same time, scholars emphasise constructivist theories as the rising paradigm in international relations. This paper argues that the new regionalism aims to combine these debates by bringing different macro and meso level theories together in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and the determinants of regionalism and the linkages with international order and the globalisation process. It also aims to provide a framework facilitating the comparability of different integration and regionalisation processes. Indeed, the Euro-centrism inherent in many traditional approaches severely limits their insights into the more general aspects of regionalism.

While ‘new regionalism’ has received a good deal of scholarly attention in recent years its full potential remains to be investigated. The purpose of this paper is to enhance conceptual and normative understandings of the ‘new regionalism’ as related closely to globalisation and international order. In a first step, the paper reflects critically on the shortcomings of orthodox approaches to regional integration and co-operation. In a second step, the essay illuminates the new regionalism research programme in relation to other regionalisation theories and as a theoretical framework for the analysis.

## **2 Traditional Approaches to Regionalisation – A Critique**

It is necessary here to make a distinction between regionalisation and regionalism. Regionalism represents a general phenomenon, denoting formal projects and processes. It also refers to a body of norms, values and ideas.<sup>3</sup> The process of

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<sup>3</sup> M. Schulz, F. Söderbaum and J. Öjendal, ‘Introduction - A Framework for Understanding Regionalization’, in: M. Schulz, F. Söderbaum and J. Öjendal (eds.), *Regionalization in a Globalizing World – A Comparative Perspective on Forms, Actors and Processes*, (London, Zed Books, 2001), p. 5.

regionalisation, on the other hand, depicts a multidimensional process of intra-regional change that occurs simultaneously at several levels of social, political and economic interaction.<sup>4</sup>

Theoretical approaches to regionalism, regional integration and regional co-operation have a long history. Post-WWII research on this topic peaked with the evolution of regionalism in the 1960s. Scholars have been particularly fascinated with developments in Western Europe where organisations such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) seemed to provide an entirely new paradigm for regional integration. Europe became, therefore, something of a testing ground for a variety of new approaches.

Theoretical perspectives to regionalisation and regional co-operation cover a wide spectrum. While this is not the place to criticise any of the traditional approaches to regional integration in a very detailed manner, almost all of them are characterised by considerable shortcomings, limiting their insights into the determinants driving regionalism. They are often too narrowly focused, offering at best a partial picture of a much more complex process. Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction, the predominance of studies on the European experience can be problematic. Indeed there is no shortage of theoretical scholarship on the European Union (EU). However, any approach treating European integration as *sui generis* will ultimately fail to allow for generalisations regarding the nature of regionalism. In addition, a meaningful comparison with other regional groupings and processes becomes almost impossible. One group of scholars remarks:

Ironically it is probably fair to say that the EU as an exercise in regional integration is one of the major obstacles to the development of analytical and theoretical studies of regional integration. For example, the characterization of Asian and Latin American regionalisms as ‘loose’ or ‘informal’ reflects a teleological prejudice informed by the assumption that ‘progress’ in regional organization is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalization.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> B. Hettne, ‘Globalization and the New Regionalism: The Second Great Transformation’, in: B. Hettne, A. Sapir, O. Sunkel (eds.), *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> S. Breslin, R. Higgott, B. Rosamond, ‘Regions in Comparative Perspective’, in: S. Breslin, C. W. Hughes, N. Phillips, B. Rosamond (eds.), *New Regionalisms in the Global Political Economy*, (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 11.

Nonetheless, it is the European experience that has the longest tradition in the post-WWII world. Partly as a result of that, European integration theory has been at the heart of the academic debate on regionalism. Many approaches were specifically developed in order to explain the particularities of the European Union. Furthermore, the European case became something like a role model for successful regionalism. Political decision-makers and academic and economic élites conceptualise region building with reference to the European case. That, however, makes any comparison between the EU and other forms of regionalism a rather hazardous adventure. The problem lies in the danger of adopting a Euro-centric approach. The European version of regionalism (in the form of the EU) has a well-developed institutional structure and a long history, which makes it very tempting to see it as the benchmark for regional integration.<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally, two broad and opposing schools have dominated the theoretical debate surrounding the study of regionalisation: state-centric ideas and supranationalism. State-centric models are still important for the study of international relations.<sup>7</sup> However, a distinction must be made between structure and agency. Indeed, the agency of nation-states is central to any regional arrangement. This implies that regional co-operation is the result of intergovernmental bargaining.<sup>8</sup> Although they have their justification, intergovernmentalist paradigms fail to explain satisfactorily regionalisation processes such as European integration. One of the reasons could be what Ben Rosamond described as ‘theoretical circularity’: intergovernmentalist approaches are based on assumptions, which pre-empt their conclusions.<sup>9</sup> Since nation-states and state-actors and agents are deemed to be at the centre of analysis, the research focuses on the outcomes and dynamics of interactions between national governments. Thus, the influence of non-governmental factors might be automatically excluded from any explanation.

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<sup>6</sup> See B. Rosamond, *Regional Integration in Europe and Asia*, Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF University, <<http://www.asef.org>> (accessed 02.05.2002).

<sup>7</sup> To integration theory see: B. Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), E. B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1958). D. N. Chrysoschoou, *Theorizing European Integration*, (London, Sage Publications, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> See A. Moravcsik, ‘Negotiating the Single European Act’, in: B. F. Nelsen, A. C-G. Stubb (eds.), *The European Union – Readings on Theory and Practice of European Integration*, (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), p. 211

In recent years, trends and developments such as the globalisation process and enhanced regionalisation have challenged the authority of the nation-state and created multiple levels of governance. This implies a shift of state functions away from the national to the sub-national and the international level. Furthermore, the meaning of the term 'state' is often left unclear. James Caporaso, for example, focuses on different ideal forms of state: the Westphalian, the regulatory and the post-modern variants.<sup>10</sup> Looking at regional arrangements through the respective lenses provided by these categories leads to very different research questions and conclusions.<sup>11</sup> In addition, many state-centric approaches tend to present a static view of regional co-operation where change is only possible as a result of alterations to international power configurations.

Supranational approaches are also characterised by a number of shortcomings. Federalism, for instance, is mainly concerned with the creation of state-like order at the international level.<sup>12</sup> This, however, implies either that federalist theory does not fully understand the problem, which it is attempting to solve, or that it provides an imperfect solution. If the organisational structure of the territorial nation-state is intrinsically flawed, how can the reproduction of this model at the international level be a solution? An international system based on nation-states which are prone to warlike tendencies will not necessarily become more stable and secure if states are simply replaced by larger territorial units with state-like features. This critique of federalism has motivated people like David Mitrany to develop a functionalist perspective.<sup>13</sup> Functionalism and neofunctionalism are interesting paradigms on post-national regionalism, especially with regard to the revival of regionalism in the

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<sup>9</sup> Rosamond, *European Integration*, p. 152.

<sup>10</sup> J. A. Caporaso, 'The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern', in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. See also Rosamond, *European Integration*, pp. 154 – 155.

<sup>12</sup> The idea of a federal post-war Europe was expressed in the 1941 Ventotene Manifesto by A. Spinelli. See *The Manifesto of Ventotene*, <<http://www.eurplace.org/diba/cultura/ventmaen.html>> (accessed 28.06.2001). See also S. Pistone, 'Alberto Spinelli and the Strategy for the United States of Europe', in: Nelsen et al., *European Union*, pp. 69. A. Spinelli, 'The Growth of the European Movement since the Second World War', in: M. Hodges (ed.), *European Integration*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972). D. J. Elazar, *Exploring Federalism*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987). J. Pinder, *European Community – The Building of a Union*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991). R. A. Jones, *The Politics and Economics of the European Union – An Introductory Text*, (Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 1996).

1990s.<sup>14</sup> The importance of functionalism lies in the fact that it provides the foundation for neofunctionalism, interdependence theory and multi-level governance approaches: ‘Paradoxically, although many current scholars of integration would deny an affiliation to functionalism, recent work on EU governance certainly shares the imagery of complex, overlapping, multi-level authorities that we find in the functionalist repertoire.’<sup>15</sup> One of the main criticisms of Mitrany’s functionalism is that it rests on the assumption that integration is a gradual and linear movement based on the abilities of people and governments to make rational decisions. It is furthermore based on a dichotomy between technical issues and politics. In the real world, however, technocracy and politics are heavily intertwined. However, recent scholarly work argues that ‘functionalism provides a means of understanding the current state and likely future of European integration, both normatively and empirically’.<sup>16</sup>

Like his intellectual predecessor, functionalism, neofunctionalism is an international relations based integration theory. Neofunctionalism was developed as an attempt to explain integration in Europe, which was seen as symptomatic of a wider phenomenon. In that sense, neofunctionalism could work in any regional setting.<sup>17</sup> And indeed, scholars such as Ernst Haas and Karl Deutsch envisioned that the study of the European process would lead eventually to wider generalisations regarding regionalisation.<sup>18</sup> Whereas ‘functionalism was primarily a theory of *post-territorial governance*, [...] neofunctionalism was an early theory of *regionalism*.’<sup>19</sup> Thus, neofunctionalism was and is important for the study of regionalism. Of particular

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<sup>13</sup> See D. Mitrany, ‘A Working Peace System’, in: Nelsen et al., *European Union*, pp. 89. L. N. Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963).

<sup>14</sup> See E. B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1958). K. W. Deutsch, S. A. Burrell, R. A. Kann, M. Lee, M. Lichterman, R. E. Lindgren, F. L. Loewenheim and R. W. van Wangeren, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957). E. B. Haas, ‘International Integration: The European and the Universal Process’, in: *International Organization*, vol. 15, 1961.

<sup>15</sup> Rosamond, *European Integration*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Warleigh, *Flexible Integration*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> K. W. Deutsch, S. A. Burrell, R. A. Kann, M. Lee, M. Lichterman, R. E. Lindgren, F. L. Loewenheim and R. W. van Wangeren, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957). E. B. Haas, ‘International Integration: The European and the Universal Process’, in: *International Organization*, vol. 15, 1961.

<sup>19</sup> Rosamond, *European Integration*, p. 69. Emphasis in source.

interest is the neofunctionalist preoccupation with background conditions for regional co-operation and attempts to develop an early theoretical framework for the study of 'comparative regionalism'.<sup>20</sup>

Another problem that needs to be pointed out is an almost exclusive focus on the regional level (including the national and the sub-national levels) by many theoretical approaches to regionalisation and European integration.<sup>21</sup> This severely limits insights into the determinants of regionalisation since there is ample reason to assume that the development of regional processes is linked with events originating outside the region in question. Although this has been acknowledged by approaches such as the realist/neorealist schools of thought, regime and interdependence theory, or the study of security communities, these traditions have their own intrinsic weaknesses with respect to European integration.

### **3 The New Regionalism Approach – A Framework for Analysis**

Regionalisation is an extremely complicated and multi-layered process. Although many integration theories have been developed with reference to the European experience, regionalisation is not and has not been an isolated European phenomenon. Regional co-operation has been attempted throughout the world with varying success. Regional processes are different from case to case depending on economic, strategic, cultural and socio-political realities as well as historical legacies and extra-regional factors.

Theoretical approaches to regionalism and regionalisation deal with different aspects of the same phenomenon. They use different assumptions and, hence, come to different conclusions. However, almost all of them concentrate on certain topics and issues while leaving others aside. Thus, they are able to explain certain outcomes,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 70. See also: C. Pentland, *International Theory and European Integration*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> Functionalism and neofunctionalism are notable exceptions in this context.

procedures and policies but fail to present the whole picture.<sup>22</sup> One opportunity to side-step these problems is offered by the so-called new regionalism approach:

While this is not the place to rehearse a critique of each variant [of integration theory], all of them are deficient inasmuch as they understate power relations, deal inadequately or not at all with production, and fail to offer an explanation of structural transformation. In some ways a break with this tradition, the new regionalism approach explores contemporary forms of transnational cooperation and cross-border flows through comparative, historical, and multilevel perspectives.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that 'new regionalism' is not merely a phrase to describe a relatively recent trend in international relations, namely the new popularity and revival of regional solutions and organisations throughout the world since the late 1980s. It is more than that: it can also be regarded as a developing theoretical framework or research programme for the interpretation, explanation, analysis and comparison of regional processes. Proponents and pioneers of the new regionalism, such as Björn Hettne or Frederick Söderbaum, stress the necessity for a wider framework for the analysis and understanding of regional processes, taking not only political and economic factors into account but also the influence of socio-cultural aspects while placing regional developments in a wider international context.<sup>24</sup>

In such a manner, the new regionalism can be employed as an analytical tool for the comparison of different regions described as geographical and ecological units, social systems, being members of regional organisations, having shared civil societies and possessing distinctive identities and actor capabilities.<sup>25</sup> It is a flexible and dynamic approach, which is not exclusively based on the European experience. Regionalisation is regarded as a comprehensive multidimensional process including not only trade and economic developments but also environmental, social policy and security issues. In

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<sup>22</sup> However, one should bear in mind that all abstract models simplify reality for the sake of analysing a particular problem. A model that would consider all details of the colourful reality would be as useful as a map with a scale of one to one.

<sup>23</sup> J. H. Mittelman, 'Rethinking the "New Regionalism" in the Context of Globalization', in: *Global Governance*, vol. 2, 1996, p. 189.

<sup>24</sup> See B. Hettne, F. Söderbaum, 'Theorising the Rise of Regionness', in: *New Political Economy*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> B. Hettne, 'The New Regionalism: Implications for Development and Peace', in: B. Hettne, A. Inotai (eds.), *The New Regionalism – Implications for Global Development and International Security*, (Helsinki, UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research, 1994), pp. 1.

this way the 'new regionalism' forms part of a global structural transformation in which non-states actors are also active and operate simultaneously at several levels of the international political economy.<sup>26</sup>

The next sections will briefly outline the normative foundations of the new regionalism. The framework draws from international relations theory. It uses constructivist ontologies and, thus, highlights the importance of ideational factors. It also emphasises the importance of historical analysis for the study of regionalisation processes. The historical political and social construction of regionalisation is central to this approach.<sup>27</sup> The new regionalism approach explicitly aims to place regional developments into a wider international context. Therefore, it will be necessary to elucidate scholarship on globalisation and international order and relate it to the new regionalism framework. Furthermore, the connections between the new regionalism and multilevel governance and network approaches will be elaborated.

### **3.1 The New Regionalism and Social Constructivism**

Constructivist ideas form an important building block of new regionalism scholarship. Indeed, constructivist ontologies provide the major explanatory pillar of the new regionalism approach. In that respect the new regionalism is more a framework for the study of international relations.

It is perhaps necessary here to briefly reflect on the main arguments of social constructivism. Constructivism can be best described as a broad movement connecting international theory with sociological concerns encompassing Weberian interpretative sociology, symbolic interactionism, variants of Marxism, post-structuralism and hermeneutics.<sup>28</sup> Constructivists share a belief that institutions and structures are social normative constructs. Preferences and interests of agents in international relations are not pre-determined externally but are influenced by norms,

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<sup>26</sup> See B. Hettne, 'Globalization, the New Regionalism and East Asia', in: T. Tanaka, T. Inoguchi (eds.), *Globalisation and Regionalism*, Hayama, United Nations University, Global Seminar '96 Shonan Session, 1996, pp. 9-11, <<http://www.unu.edu/unupress/globalism.html>> (accessed 04.12.2000).

<sup>27</sup> Schulz, et al.; p. 14.

culture and identities.<sup>29</sup> Constructivism generally rejects rational theories of international relations, which explain regional processes and international co-operation with the help of strategic interests and relative gains and losses. Interests and preferences are determined through processes of interaction; they are socially constructed. That implies that conditions such as anarchy at the international level and security dilemma situations are not inevitable but are socially constructed and, therefore, can be de-constructed.<sup>30</sup> Although the behaviour of international actors is influenced by conditions such as anarchy it is also the behaviour of these actors, which is reproducing these conditions.

The notion of identity is an important concept in discussing the formation of a region. The multiple identity framework is of particular interest with regard to collective regional identities. For the construction of such an identity some form of binding element is needed. Examples are a common culture, a common ethnic background, shared linguistic similarities, common experiences, a common heritage, shared norms and values. Most of these components are also useful for the formation of national identities. It follows that many different national and cultural identities have to be taken into consideration for the formation of common regional identities. However, cultural and other collective identities do not have to be the same. The diversity of cultures, languages and ethnic groups, which are characteristic of many regional entities, do not necessarily pose major obstacles to the formation of regional identities.

The concept of identity provides the crucial link between the structure of the international or regional environment and the interests of the various actors and the formation of policies. These actors and their policies determine the form, shape and structure of international and regional settings but, on the other hand, the same

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<sup>28</sup> R. Palan, 'Evaluating the Constructivist Critique in International Relations', in: *Review of International Studies*, vol. 26, 2000, p. 576.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576. See also J. M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 145.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics', in: *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992.

settings influence the behaviour, the capabilities, the definition of identities and interests as well as the very existence of international agents.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of norms and rules has also been indicated in the academic discussion of regime theory.<sup>32</sup> Social constructivism allows for a deeper impact of norms on regional and international order. Norms and rules can usually be defined as collective expectations for proper behaviour given certain circumstances. Norms have a regulatory character, as argued by neoliberal regime theorists. Hence, norms establish expectations about who the actors are in particular structures and how they might behave.<sup>33</sup> Norms become rules in the form of institutionalised procedures and are at the heart of all international regimes and regional arrangements. They therefore influence the institutional structure of international order and constitute and shape the basic identities of international actors.<sup>34</sup> Norms can go even further and generate a re-definition of actor interests and identities, including collective identities of regional organisations.<sup>35</sup> In a relatively recent work Amitav Acharya describes the crucial role that norms are playing in socialisation processes among states which form security communities.<sup>36</sup> These socialisation processes may even result in the breakdown of security dilemma situations among those states. The key point is that norms, as well as material factors, regulate the behaviour of international actors. They describe the regulative cultural content of international politics while identities are regulative accounts of the international actors themselves.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> R. L. Jepperson, A. Wendt, P. J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security', in: P. J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> R. O. Keohane, S. Hoffmann, 'Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s', in: R. O. Keohane, S. Hoffmann (eds.), *The New European Community: Decisionmaking and Institutional Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991). R. O. Keohane, *After Hegemony – Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1984). S. Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', in: S. Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983). R. E. Breckinridge, 'Reassessing Regimes: The International Regime Aspects of the European Union', in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1997.

<sup>33</sup> Jepperson et al., *Norms, Identity and Culture*, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> A. Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia – ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, (New York, Routledge, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

<sup>37</sup> P. Kowert, J. Legro, 'Norms, Identities, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise', in: Katzenstein, *National Security*, p. 435.

Identities form and generate interests since many interests depend on the construction of some kind of self-identity in relation to others. Consequently, actors can develop interests in enacting or developing particular identities. The commitment to a configuration of certain sets of identities, therefore, reinforces the acceptance of certain norms and, in turn, affects the normative structure of regional relations. Examples are cases of regional co-operation within trade and security regimes or regional arrangements such as the EU or ASEAN. The policies and actions of international actors such as, for instance, nation-states, are influenced by the perception of self-identity and national interests. They also re-produce and re-construct constantly the cultural and institutional structure of the international system.

Norms and identities also shape and form the instruments that actors and agents have at their disposal. Furthermore, they shape the awareness and acceptance of methods and technologies, which are available and acceptable to achieve certain objectives. The use of military force, for example, might be a monopoly of sovereign nation-states. However, under regimes such as those inherent in the EU or ASEAN the use of military force against fellow member-states has been explicitly or implicitly renounced. The acceptance of international and regional norms, such as the acceptance of certain human rights, diffuse and change theoretical constructs like sovereignty. To summarise, the web of implicit and explicit norms shape identities, interests and available instruments of public and private actors and are imperative for the understanding of regionalisation. This links to the debate surrounding the 'new institutionalist' approach to the study of the EU since it highlights the existence of 'micro regimes' within institutions and EU policies.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, constructivist ontologies are central for the understanding of the new regionalism research programme. They provide a normative basis and emphasise the important and determining role that inter-subjective factors such as identities, norms, ideas and other socio-cultural elements play in influencing and driving the pace and shape of regionalisation processes. Without recognising this it would be rather difficult to explain the formation of regions satisfactorily. The interaction between

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<sup>38</sup> M. Aspinwall, G. Schneider (eds.), *The Rules of Integration. The Institutional Approach to European Studies*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001).

public and private actors and between these actors and the international and regional structure produces, forms and reshapes these actors as well as the political, economic and social structures at the sub-national, national and regional levels of interaction. Through constant processes of interaction and socialisation, actors at these levels of international relations are able to re-define their interests and, eventually, develop collective identities. The interests and relations of institutional and non-institutional actors at the different policy levels have a crucial impact in shaping regionalisation processes. At the same time these relations and preferences are not exogenously pre-determined but are influenced by the emerging regional order and structure. This interaction is changing over time and so is the relative importance of certain actor groups for the regionalisation process.

### **3.2 The New Regionalism and Governance Approaches**

The social constructivist block of the new regionalism grants explanatory power to non-material factors such as identities, norms and principles. However, these factors are not floating freely but are bound to a multitude of actors at different levels of international relations. While constructivism is becoming an ever more popular paradigm in the academic field of international relations, another body of scholarship is evolving which analyses regionalisation as evolving systems of multi-level governance. Within this context, particular emphasis is being placed on the functional operation of different administrative levels within the EU.<sup>39</sup> The institutional arrangements within a multi-level governance framework can be understood as a network of horizontal and vertical linkages that connect local, regional, central state and European authorities. Although multi-level governance approaches focus mainly on Europe, there is no reason why such an analysis could not be applied to understanding other regional structures. Consequently, concepts of network and multi-governance approaches can also be regarded as part of the new regionalism research agenda.

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<sup>39</sup> See for instance M. Perkmann, 'Building Governance Institutions Across European Borders', in: *Regional Studies: The Journal of the Regional Studies Association*, vol. 33, no. 7, 1999. A. Jordan, 'The European Union: An Evolving System of Multi-Level Governance ... or Government?', in: *Policy & Politics*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2001. A. Benz, B. Eberlein, *Regions in European Governance. The Logic of Multi-Level Interaction*, EUI Working Paper RSC, No. 98/ 31, European University Institute, Florence, 1998.

Networks in particular have become increasingly fashionable objects of study as new forms of social, political and economic organisation. Network approaches share the concept of a network as a set of relatively stable relationships which are non-hierarchical and interdependent, linking a variety of actors who share common interests with regard to certain policies and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests, acknowledging that co-operation is the best way to achieve common goals.<sup>40</sup> Transnational linkages and networks are decisive factors in the dynamics of regionalisation processes. Regionalisation is viewed as a complex and multi-faceted process involving formal integration and regionalisation, through conscious decision-making at the political and institutional level, and informal integration/regionalisation.<sup>41</sup> Network approaches have been applied to the study of regional governance by a variety of scholars. Accordingly, regional systems such as the EU can be characterised as systems of overlapping networks.<sup>42</sup>

The idiosyncrasies of the European integration process escape most traditional neofunctionalist and intergovernmentalist analytical approaches. Multi-level governance and network analyses are capable of dealing with the interconnectedness and interdependence of institutions and actor-groups within political and regulatory decision-making processes that are typical for EU policy-making.<sup>43</sup> Multi-level governance approaches emphasise the multi-dimensional interaction of economic, political and social actors and, accordingly, frame structures such as the EU as ‘a system of complex, multi-tiered, geographically overlapping structures of

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<sup>40</sup> T. A. Börzel, ‘What’s So Special About Policy Networks? – An Exploration of the Concept and Its Usefulness in Studying European Governance’, in: *European Integration Online Papers*, vol. 1, no. 16, 1997, <<http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1997-016a.htm>> (accessed 07.05.2002).

<sup>41</sup> A. Bressand, K. Nicolaïdis, ‘Regional Integration in a Network World Economy’, in: W. Wallace (ed.), *The Dynamics of European Integration*, (London, Pinter Publishers, 1992), p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. R. O. Keohane, S. Hoffmann, *Institutional Change in Europe*. B. Kohler-Koch, ‘European Networks and Ideas: Changing National Policies?’, in: *European Integration Online Papers*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2002, <<http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2002-006a.htm>> (downloaded 07.05.2002).

<sup>43</sup> See G. Marks, L. Hooghe, K. Blank, ‘European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-level Governance’, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1996. L. Hooghe, G. Marks, ‘Types of Multi-Level Governance’, in: *European Integration Online Papers*, vol. 5, no. 11, 2001, <<http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2001-011a.htm>> (downloaded 07.05.2002). J. Richardson, ‘Policy-making in the EU: Interests, Ideas and Garbage Cans of Primeval Soup’, in: J. Richardson (ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy-Making*, (London, Routledge, 1996). See also the discussion surrounding the new institutionalism in: N. Nugent, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, fifth edition, 2002), pp. 488. E. Grande, *Institutions and Interests: Interest Groups in the European System of Multi-level Governance*, Technische Universität München, Lehrstuhl für Politische Wissenschaft, Working Paper No. 1/ 2001, May 2001.

governmental and non-governmental élites.’<sup>44</sup> Regionalisation and integration can be understood as open-ended processes involving sub-national, national and international actors from all sectors of political, social and economic life.<sup>45</sup> Vertically (between various levels of competence) and horizontally (across different levels of governance) interconnected institutions and other actors operate at supra-national, national and sub-national levels in a power sharing process that engulfs integration as well as devolution and regionalisation trends. This process is characterised by intensive vertical and horizontal networking and results in the emergence of different and relatively new modes of regional governance (co-operative networks, hierarchy and competition).<sup>46</sup>

To sum up, multi-level governance approaches focus on the different levels of governance and policy-making within regional structures. Decision-making is shared among various actors at the local, the regional and the international level rather than being monopolised by the state or supranational institutions. Sub-national private and public actors form transnational networks and operate at the national, regional and international levels.

Constructivist ideas, multi-level governance and network approaches to regional integration and co-operation indicate that regionalisation is a multi-faceted multi-actor process where forces and agents from the economic, the social and the political arenas interact with each other at the local, the regional and the international level. They are, therefore central to the new regionalism framework. While constructivism primarily focuses on the dynamics of norms and identity-formation, the building block of multilevel governance and network approaches analyses policy- and decision-making structures at the international, the national and sub-national level of political, economic and social interaction. The new regionalism suggests the synthesis of multilevel governance scholarship with constructivist ontologies. While the latter

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<sup>44</sup> W. Wessels, ‘An Ever Closer Fusion? – A Dynamic Macropolitical View on Integration Processes’, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1997, pp. 291.

<sup>45</sup> See Commission of the European Communities, *Multi-Level Governance: Linking and Networking the various Regional and Local Levels*, Report by Working Group 4c, 2001. J. Fairbrass, A. Jordan, ‘Protecting Biodiversity in the European Union: National Barriers and European Opportunities’, in: *Journal of European Policy*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> See G. Falkner, ‘Corporatist Governance and Europeanization. No Future in the Multi-Level Game?’, in: *European Integration Online Papers*, vol. 1, no. 011, 1997.

provides the explanatory element and emphasises the importance of ideational factors, the former provides a descriptive account how these factors are applied as interests at various levels of global and regional governance.

### **3.3 The New Regionalism and the Global Structural Transformation Process**

The ultimate aim of new regionalism scholarship is to offer reflections upon possible generalisations about the determinants of regional processes. This can be the outcome of a meaningful comparison between different regional groupings. Researchers on regionalism are also interested in issues such as power distribution within a region (state power, social and economic group power, network power), the relations between state and region (and the national and the sub-national level) and issues of agency (who are the actors involved in regionalisation). Other questions concern the variations of regional institutional organisations and the subsequent implications for interest- and identity-formation of actors. In addition, we need to enquire into the relationships between regionalisation, the nation-state, globalisation and international order.

The new regionalism is part of a fundamental global structural transformation process. As a trend in world politics it encompasses a renaissance of regionalisation tendencies and the revival and creation of regional institutions. The underlying purpose, content and logic of regionalisation are also changing. Regionalisation is closely linked with international order, as giving structure to an anarchical international system, and the globalisation process, either as a consequence of or a reaction to it. Subsequently, the linkages between these concepts need to be elaborated in a little more detail.

#### **3.3.1 International Order**

Regionalisation can be interpreted as a conceptual entry into the problem of international order at a regional level. International order is concerned with the political, economic and social organisation of the international political economy. International order can be understood as the result of international summits or the

outcome of lengthy processes by which principles and rules of conduct and behaviour are agreed and implemented. It is a set of norms, arrangements, regimes and institutions on an international scale which regulates the relations between international actors and, in time, alters the attitudes of the decision-makers.<sup>47</sup> Defined in this way international order is a dynamic process shaped by a multitude of actors including, among others, national governments, state institutions and agencies as well as a huge variety of non-state actors. International order has an instrumental character. It describes the relations between various international actors who introduce structure into their relations. Furthermore, it can be classified into economic order, security order, political order and civil order. However, it is often difficult to maintain such a clear-cut division. Economic order and security order are closely interlocked. Without ordering trade any security order would be doomed to fail while, on the other hand, without security order trade would become difficult and trade order impossible.<sup>48</sup> Order is not universal but always limited to the acceptance of the actors involved. Order is not restricted to co-operation but can also be enforced by more powerful actors. Consequently, order is not power-free.

The term 'international order' in itself can be misleading. There is no single overarching international order enforced by coherent global or international institutions. Nation-states are still the only international actors enjoying complete sovereignty and a monopoly of force. At best, there is a network of overlapping relationships between various international actors who have introduced a number of international and regional regimes, arrangements and rules of conduct to bring order into their relations. These actors form linkages of all kinds and the resulting networks range from international banking, trade and market networks, economic and military interdependencies, labour and political migrations, international standards and regulations, intellectual and information exchanges, multilateral treaties, multinational corporations, energy and technology flows, to religious missionary movements,

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<sup>47</sup> J. Krause, 'Overview', in: Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation (ed.), *Strengthening International Order – The Role of Asia-Europe Co-operation*, (Tokyo, Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000), p. 3, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

advertising media, and consumer movements.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, international order is not static but a dynamic and historical process and, therefore, it is being formed, reshaped and transformed constantly. The term international order refers then to a set of arrangements which are closely related to each other and dominate the relations among public and private international actors. It describes an amalgam containing different sectors of international life ordering economic, security, political and civil relations among a critical mass of international actors. It describes ‘*specific solutions* to the problem of world order at a particular point in time: world orders are historical.’<sup>50</sup>

The year 1989 can be regarded as a decisive turning point for international relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In many ways, it marked the end of the Cold War and of the post-WWII international order. During the Cold War the international system was forged in global confrontation. Most issues of foreign policy could be referred to with regard to this single overwhelming factor.<sup>51</sup> The so-called ‘old regionalism’ of the 1950s and 1960s is strongly associated with the Cold War structure of international relations. Part of the American Cold War strategy was to support international co-operation and integration alongside fostering capitalist regimes all over the globe.<sup>52</sup> Therefore it is possible to argue that the ‘old regionalism’ was at least to a certain extent inward oriented and specific with regard to its objective of strengthening a particular region in face of a bi-polar confrontation.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the ‘old regionalism’ has usually been associated with the protectionist tendencies of the so-called embedded liberalism of the post-WWII world.<sup>54</sup> If ‘old regionalism’ has been a decisive feature of the international political economy during the Cold War, the ‘new regionalism’ is linked to the currently ongoing global transformation process of international order. However, the superpower-overlay has been lost and as a result the world appears to be

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<sup>49</sup> E. Frederic, Jr. Wakeman, ‘Transnational and Comparative Research’, in: B. E. Brown, R. C. Macridis (eds.), *Comparative Politics – Notes and Readings*, (Belmont, Wadsworth Inc., 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 1990), p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> M. Spindler, *New Regionalism and the Construction of Global Order*, CSGR Working Paper No. 93/02, 2002, p. 9. Emphasis in original.

<sup>51</sup> R. Cooper, *The Post-Modern State and the World Order*, (London, Demos, 1996) p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> To this see J. R. Kurth, ‘*The Pacific Basin versus the Atlantic Alliance: Two Paradigms of International Relations*,’ in: *ANNALS*, AAPSS, 505, September 1989.

<sup>53</sup> See B. Hettne, ‘Regionalism, Security and Development: A Comparative Perspective’, in: B. Hettne, A. Inotai, O. Sunkel (eds.), *Comparing Regionalisms – Implications for Global Development*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Spindler, *New Regionalism*, p. 2.

much less unified than it was during the Cold War period. A few years later, one former superpower, the Soviet Union, vanished into history. Some states of the former Soviet bloc adapted successfully to the new situation, others had more problems. At a general level the distribution of power that determined the structure of international order during the Cold War has been altered irreversibly.

The question arises as to what kind of international order has succeeded the bipolar balance-of-terror. The thesis proposing the rise of regionalism since the end of the Cold War has been contested by various scholars. Indeed, it is tempting to conclude that a uni-polar system characterised by American hegemony has emerged. At the moment the United States stands alone as the only truly global power. But it is far from being an unrestrained hegemon. America's economic and military advantages are many but they are not necessarily permanent nor are they unlimited. Furthermore, the US is constrained in its actions by its very own preferences and interests as well as by international norms and laws. Although its military might is formidable, its intervention capability is generally restricted by the acceptance of international norms such as the non-use of weapons of mass destruction. The US public, as well as the Congress of the United States, have to be convinced about the necessity of military action and economic constraints might bar the way for interventionist policies.

[...] even though the United States remained in 1991 the only great power possessing global military reach, the economic and political constraints on the use of that capability were growing year by year.<sup>55</sup>

Speculations about the emerging international system range from the kind of uni-polarity just described to multi-polarity.<sup>56</sup> They include liberal models foreseeing a power shift away from the nation-state towards international institutions or transnational governance as described in the pages before.<sup>57</sup> Others forecast a rise in

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<sup>55</sup> R. Rosencrance, 'Regionalism and the Post-Cold War Era', in *International Journal*, XLVI, 1991, p. 378.

<sup>56</sup> J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', in: *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1990. M. Mastanduno, 'Preserving the Unipolar Moment - Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War', in: *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1997.

<sup>57</sup> R. O. Keohane, J. S. Jr. Nye, 'Power and Independence in the Information Age', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 5, 1998.

instability and conflict.<sup>58</sup> Territorial fragmentation, the rise of discord and hostilities in many regions since 1989, seems to support that particular approach. Once the superpower rivalry ended, old, submerged and suppressed tensions re-surfaced. One particular feature of the post-Cold War struggles seems to be that they take the form of civil strife. Hence, many of them take part within states rather than between them. The civil strife in Indonesia's Aceh province and in former Yugoslavia are but two examples.

Richard Rosencrance anticipates the development of a concert of big powers in order to replace the bipolar balance. Possible candidates include the United States, the European Union, Russia, China and Japan.<sup>59</sup> According to Rosencrance, the United Nations' Security Council is one manifestation of that central coalition.<sup>60</sup> Another possibility anticipates the coming confrontation between the United States and challenging powers. Some suggest China as an emerging great power rival of the US in the Pacific<sup>61</sup>, a view that is reflected in the attitude of the new George W. Bush administration during its first months in the White House. However, there is little evidence for regionalisation in order to counterbalance the position of the US. Instead it seems as if the pivotal states in most regions have chosen to align themselves with Washington.

John Ikenberry denies the development of a new order in international relations. He claims the international setting introduced after World War II still lives on:

What ended with the Cold War was bipolarity, the nuclear stalemate, and decades of containment of the Soviet Union – seemingly the most dramatic and consequential features of the postwar era. But the world order created in the middle to late 1940s endures, more extensive and in some respects more robust than during its Cold War years. Its basic principles, which deal with organization and relations among the Western liberal democracies, are alive and well.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See, for instance, S. P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, 1993.

<sup>59</sup> R. Rosencrance, 'A New Concert of Powers', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, 1992.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> See R. Bernstein, R. H. Munro, 'The Coming Conflict with America', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 2, 1997. B. B. Jr. Conable, D. M. Lampton, 'China: The Coming Power', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 5, 1993. N. D. Kristof, 'The Rise of China', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 5, 1993.

<sup>62</sup> J. G. Ikenberry, 'The Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos', in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 3, 1996.

Following that logic the end of the Cold War did not produce a new order but rather proclaimed the ideological victory of capitalism and liberal democracy. It ended, therefore, the division of the world into two different ideological systems.<sup>63</sup>

Having provided a brief review of the literature dealing with the post-Cold War order, it is clear that there is no agreement in academic and political circles about the emerging international order. The debate emphasises, however, that more than ten years after the end of the Cold War the questions of the structure of the international system and international order remain open issues. A single hegemonic approach simply does not exist. However, the multitude of competing viewpoints should not be perceived as problematic. It signals a lively academic debate about the future of the global political economy. It also appears that the current geopolitical environment is much more complex than big-power politics. The international environment today is characterised by much more uncertainty and change. The ideological victory of liberal capitalism supported the spread of the idea of globalisation. The traditional nation-state system and its regulative structure is facing a number of new challenges and, as a result, has to respond. It appears as if the world is caught in the middle of a process of fragmentation, integration and regionalisation through which the old structures of international politics and economics will be either reformed or replaced. However, for the moment, neither the reformation nor the replacement are finished. Times of change are usually times of chaos and possibility. They give rise to theoretical speculation about the future of world politics. That might help explain the number, variety and range of different models and suggestions to the post-Cold War world. It also might explain the revival of regionalism in the 1990s throughout the world since it offers the possibility of introducing structure and security into international relations on a regional as well global scale through inter-regional institutions and relations.

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<sup>63</sup> Francis Fukuyama speaks in this context about the 'end of history'. See: F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

### 3.3.2 The Globalisation Process<sup>64</sup>

The current international environment is characterised by a multitude of forces. Among them are those which can be attributed to the globalisation process and its consequences are of crucial importance for the development, politics and analysis of international relations. Indeed, the analysis of post-Cold War regionalisation processes cannot be separated from the globalisation process. This refers to questions such as whether regional trade arrangements are protective measures or initiators of ever increasing freer global trade.<sup>65</sup> Another point of view understands regionalisation and integration as a way of ‘negotiating’ globalisation.<sup>66</sup> Some scholars interpret regionalisation processes as the creation of social buffers against potentially disruptive and disturbing effects of globalisation.<sup>67</sup>

However, globalisation as a term is frequently used in academic circles, political rhetoric and the everyday press as if its meaning were self-evident. There is no consensus on what is globalisation and this makes it necessary to carefully elucidate this contested concept. Academic literature offers an amazing variety of different approaches and theories concerning the notion of globalisation. Almost every researcher in the social sciences seems to have something to add to the ongoing discourse. Jan Art Scholte presents the dilemma by offering a collection of definitions. These range from defining globalisation as the development of a global society, highlighting the rising internationalisation of production and capital, or the international division of labour, to a focus on issues such as transnational migration or external environmental effects.<sup>68</sup> Some critics regard globalisation as a misconception

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<sup>64</sup> For the following discussion on globalisation and international security see U. Wunderlich, ‘Globalisation and International Security in the Taiwan Straits’, in: *Global Change, Peace and Security*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 122.

<sup>65</sup> See H. Hveem, ‘Explaining the Regional Phenomenon in the Era of Globalization’, in: R. Stubbs, G. Underhill (eds.), *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000). S. Sideri, ‘Globalisation and Regional Integration’, in: S. Peige (ed.), *Regions and Development: Politics, Security and Economics*, (London, Franc Cass, 2000). J. Mittelman, R. Falk, ‘Global Hegemony and Regionalism’, in: S. Calleya (ed.), *Regionalism in the Post-Cold War World*, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> J. A. Scholte, *Globalization – A Critical Introduction*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> See B. Hettne, A. Inotai, O. Sunkel (eds.), *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, (London, Macmillan London 1999). Schulz et al., *Regionalization in a Globalizing World*.

<sup>68</sup> J. A. Scholte, ‘The Globalization of World Politics’ in: J. Baylis, S. Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics – An Introduction to International Relations*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 15.

altogether. In their view, globalisation is something of a myth created by neoliberals in order to foster the spread of capitalism, obscure the suppression of local cultures and bring about the 'Americanisation' of the international political economy.<sup>69</sup> This highlights the contradictions and confusions surrounding the concept. Globalisation, it seems, means different things to different people. This makes it even more necessary to clarify the terminology when dealing with such a notion. Perhaps one of the most constructive definitions has been offered by David Held.

Globalization is best understood as a spatial phenomenon, lying on a continuum with 'the local' at one end and 'the global' at the other. It denotes a shift in the spatial form of human organisation and activity to transcontinental or interregional patterns of activity, interaction and the exercise of power. [...] Globalization today implies at least two distinct phenomena. First, it suggests that many chains of political, economic and social activity are becoming interregional in scope and, secondly, it suggests that there has been an intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies.<sup>70</sup>

Consequently, globalisation can be interpreted as a multidimensional and multifaceted process, which is transforming and influencing the political, social and economic space of international relations.<sup>71</sup> It involves at least seven independent procedures: the liberalisation of international trade, the liberalisation of sectoral markets and the decline of state activities in the economic field, the increase in internationalisation of production and services, the liberalisation of financial markets, technical progress in certain key technologies, an increase in social mobility and cultural diversity and, last but not least, an increase in the number of problems which can only be solved at the international level (such as the rise of international migration or environmental problems).<sup>72</sup> With the help of these procedures it is possible to identify several distinctive indicators of globalisation:

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<sup>69</sup> Regarding the sceptical thesis of globalisation see: P. Hirst, G. Thompson, *Globalisation in Question: The International Economy and Possibilities of Governance*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1999). P. Hirst, 'The Global Economy: Myths and Realities', in: *International Affairs*, vol. 73, 1997. D. Held & A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt & J. Perraton, *Global Transformations – Politics, Economics and Culture*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999), pp. 5.

<sup>70</sup> D. Held, *Democracy and Globalization*, MPIfG Working Paper 97/5, 1997, p. 2, <<http://www.mpi-fg-koeln.mpg.de/pu/workpap/wp97-5/wp97-5.html>> (accessed 19.09.2001).

<sup>71</sup> See Krause, *Overview*, p. 10.

- Globalisation stretches social, political and economic activities across political frontiers.
- It intensifies international interdependence as flows of trade, investment, finance, migration and culture increase.
- It 'speeds up' the world since new systems of transport and communication mean that people, goods and capital travel much faster and that the diffusion of societies and cultures by information and new ideas is more rapid and more difficult to control.
- Local developments in far-away places can have enormous global consequences.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the phenomenon of globalisation involves an increase in functional integration, international interdependencies and transnational activities and interactions in the political, economic and social areas.

The extent and pace of the globalisation process today is unprecedented. Technological developments (especially in the information and communication sectors) have fostered an incredible growth in international activity in economic, political, and social areas. Another feature is the dissolution of strict dividing lines between activities, policies and consequences in these fields. It is important to note that globalisation is qualitatively different from interdependence. While the latter focuses on the increase of linkages between different sovereign entities, globalisation generates the penetration of previously sovereign space. It, therefore, does not only include the movement of goods and capital but also the circulation and interpenetration of peoples and ideas.<sup>74</sup> These dynamics are causing many structural changes including the rethinking of the role of national governments.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 10,11.

<sup>73</sup> D. Held, A. McGrew with D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton, 'Managing the Challenge of Globalization and Institutionalizing Cooperation through Global Governance', in: C. W. Jr. Kegley, E. R. Wittkopf (eds.), *The Global Agenda – Issues and Perspectives*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2001), p. 135.

<sup>74</sup> J.-M. Guehenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy', in: *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1999.

<sup>75</sup> See R. G. Lipsey, 'Globalisation and National Government Policies: An Economist's View', in: J. H. Dunning (ed.), *Governments, Globalisation and International Business*, (New York, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997), pp. 73.

With the establishment of the Westphalian system the nation-state has provided the major framework of political organisation for the exercise of national governance. One of its main features, as outlined earlier in this chapter, is the link between sovereignty and territoriality. The majority of the events occurring within its demarcated borders could be more or less efficiently controlled by national administrations in the past.

[...] sovereign states rooted in territorial notions of social space have been the prime unit for facilitating, impeding and mediating interaction between the social groups, organisations, and citizens and other categories of collective and individual social units contained within their borders.<sup>76</sup>

Yet globalisation increasingly puts the effectiveness of territorial governance based on exclusive national sovereignty in question. Hence, a crucial precondition for successful governance at the state level has been removed. National governments are increasingly unable to control multinational companies, ecological problems, international crime and terrorism or currency speculations efficiently, since these activities lack a territorial foundation. Increasing international interdependence and the penetration of sovereign space by outside forces challenge traditional modes of governance. Political, economic and social organisation at the national level in the form of the nation-state is threatened by the twin pressures of globalisation at the supranational and devolution at the sub-national level. The discussion about multi-level governance is, therefore, closely related to the globalisation problematic.

Globalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon. International transactions are at least as old as the nation-state concept itself and nation-states have never been detached from their external environment.<sup>77</sup> But due to limited technological capabilities these kinds of transactions were of a rather limited nature compared to today and could be more easily controlled by national administrations. It is not the existence of international activities but their extensiveness, their intensity, their

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<sup>76</sup> C. W. Hughes, *Globalisation and Security in the Asia-Pacific: An Initial Investigation*, CSGR Working Paper, No. 61/00, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> And so are the problems for the nation-state caused by powerful transnational actors such as, for instance, the East India Company.

velocity and the corresponding effects on society, which can create problems for the nation-state.

Regionalisation processes constitute an important dimension of globalisation. They have a spatial dimension and combine integrative and disintegrative elements. Internally they mean closer co-operation and collaboration among a well-specified group of actors. This links to the process of 'Europeanisation', referring to the regionalisation process within Europe that affects and transforms national policies and policy-making in the EU and its member-states and in the accession countries.<sup>78</sup> Externally, regionalism implies the identification of insiders and the exclusion of outsiders and has the intrinsic potential of enhanced protectionism. With regard to globalisation, regionalism can be either offensive or defensive. As one group of authors put it, globalisation and regionalism have a symbiotic relationship. Sometimes they are working against each other, at other times they are mutually reinforcing.<sup>79</sup> Hence, regionalisation can be seen as being an integral part of globalisation or, on the other hand, it can also represent a formal counter strategy against the forces of globalisation. The forces of globalisation enable a maelstrom of non-governmental actors, networks and institutions to get involved in previously exclusively governmental actor dominated policy-making processes. Regionalisation driven by globalisation forces can, for instance, imply the rise of so-called 'region states'.<sup>80</sup> These regions can lie within the territory of a nation-state (sub-national regions), straddle national borders (cross-border regions) or, in some instances, formally combine several states such as in the case of NAFTA, ASEAN or the EU.

### 3.4 The Concept of a 'Region'

The last building block of the new regionalism to be discussed here is the concept of a 'region'. Here again the academic literature does not offer a coherent definition. A

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<sup>78</sup> See C. Radaelli, 'Whiter Europeanisation? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change', in: *European Integration Online Papers*, vol. 4, no. 8, 2000, <<http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-008a.htm>> (accessed 24.09.2002). T. Risse, M. Green Cowles, J. Caporaso, *Transforming Europe. Europeanisation and Domestic Change*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>79</sup> Hettne et al., *Globalism and New Regionalism*.

<sup>80</sup> K. Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State – The Rise of Regional Economies*, (Free Press, 1996). K. Ohmae, *The Borderless World – Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*, (HarperBusiness, revised edition, 1999).

region can be empirically identified with data on mutual interactions, similarities of actor attributes, and shared values and experiences.<sup>81</sup> Geographical proximity is one of the main determinants in forming a region. Apart from that, many scholars insist that the members of a region also share cultural, linguistic, economic or political ties.<sup>82</sup> The main problem is to identify the distinctiveness of a particular geographic area as a unit characterised by enhanced political, economic and social interaction. This relates to the question of how different a certain region is with respect to other geographical entities or the international political economy in general.

Björn Hettne identifies five degrees of 'regioness'. First, a region is a geographical unit. Second, it is a social system, implying translocal and transnational relations between different actors and agents. These relations constitute a security complex in which the actors are dependent on each in terms of their own security. Third, regions can be characterised by organised co-operation in economic, political, social or military fields. In this case, a region is defined according to members of the organisation in question. Fourth, a region as a 'civil society' can take shape when the organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and values throughout the region. And, fifth, regions can emerge as collective or international actors in their own right with a distinct identity, actor capabilities, and a certain degree of legitimacy and decision-making structures.<sup>83</sup> This represents a hierarchical step-by-step development process and implies a shift of levels of authority away from the national level. In principle two directions are possible for this shift of decision-making power, authority and identification away from the state: either to the supranational or to the sub-national level.

Hettne's typology is very useful but should not be taken too far. A rigid application of this functional model of regional development would be misleading. It is based on European development and, therefore, cannot be used for a general evaluation of regionalisation. Although the model suggests an evolutionary logic for intra-regional

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<sup>81</sup> R. Väyrynen, *Post-Hegemonic and Post-Socialist Regionalism: A Comparison of East Asia and Central Europe*, University of Notre Dame, The Joan B. Kroc Institute, Occasional Paper #13:OP:3, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> E. D. Mansfield, H. V. Milner, 'The New Wave of Regionalism', in: *International Organization*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1999, p. 591.

<sup>83</sup> Hettne, *Globalization, the New Regionalism and East Asia*.

developments, there is no intrinsic determinism in regionalisation processes.<sup>84</sup> Regionalisation and the development of regions must be understood in a wider international context. Different processes of regionalisation at different levels of interaction converge in the making of a region.<sup>85</sup> It is important to mention that regions, very much like nation-states, are not permanent fixtures but historical, cultural, political and economic structures, which change in form and function over the times. Boundaries of regions are always fluid and arbitrary.<sup>86</sup> They are imagined constructs depending on social interaction and on the actors involved in the regionalisation process. There are no 'natural' regions for political scientists.<sup>87</sup> The definition of what constitutes a specific region is, therefore, self-determined by the actors and participants involved in region building.

Regions are forged and constructed by the application of different norms, principles, identities and imaginations of the various actors involved in regionalisation processes. These actors face each other at the international, the regional and the national levels of international relations and can be broadly categorised into state actors and non-state actors. State actors include nation-states and, at a lower level, their administrative frameworks and agents, while non-state actors combine, for instance, such bodies as national and multinational enterprises, non-governmental organisations or different pressure, lobby and interest groups. These actors are imperative in understanding regionalisation. Their interests, identities, norms of conduct and relations among themselves have a substantial impact on the shaping of regional structures. At the same time the emerging regional order is influencing the very same relations, interests and identities.

The constructivist building block of the new regionalism approach helps us to perceive regions as political, social and economic projects. Region building can occur from two principal directions: from 'above' and from 'below'. This corresponds to whether region building is a deliberate exercise by decision-makers or an

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<sup>84</sup> This has been recently acknowledged by Hettne and Söderbaum themselves: 'To some extent the five levels express a certain evolutionary logic, but there is, for sure, nothing deterministic with the rise of regionness.' (Hettne et al., *Rise of Regionness*, p. 34).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> Väyrynen, *Post-Hegemonic and Post-Socialist Regionalism*, pp. 6.

unintentional process. In such a way region building can be seen as an analogy to state- and nation-building. This points to the importance of cognitive and ideational factors. Thus the construct of a region can be approached in two ways: by its perception by outsiders as a regional (group-) actor and by its internal (regional) identity as a relatively distinct economic, political and social unit. It follows that the concept 'region' is based on ideational factors and, like any identity, has an external and an internal dimension. The parallels with national identities are obvious. In the current international system states have to be recognised by other states. Nation-states, therefore, find part of their identities in the face of other states. National identities on the other hand provide also an internal dimension. After all the concept of nationality implies that citizens identify with a particular political entity.

The concept 'region' defined in the manner suggested above applies to political regions in particular. Political regions in this context can be interpreted as distinct notions of collective identities based on certain norm, principles and socio-political histories. This in itself would not be enough to fulfil the conditions of the introduced definition. Identity formation requires an external dimension in order to distinguish between in- and outsiders. Through the establishment of formal political structures, regions internalise their members among their constitute members. In addition, formal political structures enable regions to be recognised as such by extra-regional actors.

## 4 Conclusion

The new regionalism approach is only the latest development in a long tradition. It incorporates many elements of earlier frameworks such as, for instance, functionalism and neofunctionalism. However, whereas traditional theories of regional integration and co-operation have been too focused, too static or simply failed to grasp the novelty of regionalisation as a fundamental part of international transformation processes and change, the new regionalism approach represents an analytical framework for the understanding of contemporary regionalism. It helps to understand the revival of regionalist tendencies in terms of the creation and regeneration of

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<sup>87</sup> J. Ravenhill, 'Competing Logics of Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific', in: *Journal of European*

regional institutions and regimes. The new regionalism agenda has to be understood as part of a wider research programme concerned with exploring and explaining the popularity of regional co-operation in the contemporary international political economy. The new regionalism approach must be seen in conjunction with a development in international relations to move beyond rationalist ontologies and theoretical parsimony to proceed towards a more comprehensive social science. This is reflected in its emphasis on norms and identities. Indeed, the historical, political and social construction of regions is central to the approach.<sup>88</sup>

A second building block is provided by the wide variety of governance approaches that introduce multiple levels of economic, social and political governance into the framework. The network and multi-level governance element concentrates mainly on the structural frameworks and the internal dynamics of regional interaction. It also enables the analysis of state and non-state actors and their respective roles and mutual interaction in regionalisation processes.

It has also been agreed that regionalisation can only be perceived in connection with the global political economy. Of particular relevance are globalisation and the ongoing global structural transformation process. The interrelations of the international, the regional, the national and the sub-national levels are imperative for the approach and cannot be easily ignored or separated from the analysis.

The concept of a 'region' is for obvious reasons a significant component in any discussion on regionalisation. There are serious difficulties, however, in distinguishing a certain 'region' from the international political economy. The new regionalism as elaborated in the context of this paper advances the definition of a region as a distinct entity that is characterised by a geographical dimension in conjunction with its extra-regional perception and regional identity.

In many ways, this is very similar to a model recently advanced by Björn Hettne and Frederick Söderbaum.<sup>89</sup> However, there are some significant differences that ought to

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*Integration*, vol. XVIII, no. 2-3, 1995, p. 181.

<sup>88</sup> Schulz et al., *Introduction*, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> Hettne, et al., *Rise of Regionness*, pp. 33.

be mentioned here. First, whereas Hettne and Söderbaum appear to view comparative studies as being an intrinsic part of their approach, this essay argues that the new regionalism can be used in order to facilitate comparisons. Second, the framework as outlined here places a much greater emphasis on governance and network approaches as building blocs of the new regionalism. It further explicitly outlines the new regionalism in the context of international order and the globalisation process. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the construct 'region' is being differently conceptualised. Hettne and Söderbaum have developed a highly sophisticated 'five level' theory of regioness. Their work suggests a certain intrinsic functional logic to regionalisation although they have attempted to modify this. This paper, on the other hand, has suggested an approach to regions from a different side altogether, and paying more attention to external and internal identities in region building.

Conceptualised in such a manner the new regionalism approach provides the theoretical toolkit enabling a meaningful comparison between different regionalisation processes and regions such as, for instance, the EU and ASEAN, without the teleological prejudice that progress in regionalisation has to be achieved along the lines of European integration. It de-emphasises the idiosyncrasies of individual regionalisation processes and argues instead that regionalisation is a complex, multi-faceted, socio-historical, multi-actor process that cannot be separated from development at the wider international level. In addition, the concept 'region' is best approached from a cognitive perspective. The analytical insights gained from such a comparison are imperative for the development of a more general theory of regionalisation.

New regionalism scholarship shares many elements with the neofunctionalist tradition. It emphasises multiple centres of authority at different regional levels of governance. Like neofunctionalism, the new regionalism research programme aims to develop a more general theory of regionalisation and regionalism. In addition to its focus on regionalisation as a process, the new regionalism offers the opportunity to analyse regions as the momentary outcomes of such processes.

Having said this, some critical points deserve to be emphasised. One point of critique regarding the approach could be its obscurity from a theoretical point of view since it

uses controversial non-consensual concepts such as globalisation and regionalism. It also carries the intrinsic danger of sacrificing and overlooking case-specific factors and determinants for the sake of generalisation.

Despite this, the new regionalism approach represents an interesting opportunity to analyse the old phenomenon of regionalisation in a new light. The breakdown of the Cold War structure, increasing international interdependencies and transnational interactions seem to have a substantial impact on regionalism considering the new popularity and revival of regional solutions since the late 1980s. However, the real impact of these global events and tendencies is still unclear and appears to be different from case to case, suggesting that there are more factors involved in regionalisation processes than explained by conventional integration theory.

Most researchers would agree that the European integration has arrived at yet another crucial point in its evolution. The recent enlargement from 15 to 25 member states marks a watershed in European development by officially overcoming Cold War divisions. However, enlargement also threatens to paralyse decision-making if no adequate institutional reforms are effectively put in place. Furthermore the recent European elections only highlight the deficiencies in democratic legitimacy, and the EU still fails to live up to its expectations in international affairs. Under such circumstances it is imperative for political decision makers and academic scholars alike to embark on a critical evaluation of the European integration process and to look for new and innovative solutions. To use the words of Alex Warleigh 'bolder and more imaginative thinking' is necessary.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Warleigh, *Flexible Integration*, p. 97.

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