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Book · January 2003

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# 1

## Introduction: Theories of New Regionalism

*Fredrik Söderbaum*

### **The *raison d'être* for another collection on new regionalism**

The resurrection and redefinition of regionalism are among the dominating trends in today's international studies. Regionalism has been brought back in to the academic as well as the policy debates after some decades of neglect. Notwithstanding the hegemony of globalization and resultant anti-globalization, regionalism constitutes a set of middle-level adjuncts or alternatives in policy and practice as well as analysis. This is especially so in the post-bipolar world of the 1990s, now reinforced by the challenges to both assumptions and action constituted by the September 11 syndrome. New regionalism – a range of formal/informal mid-level 'triangular' relations among not only states but also non-state actors, notably civil societies and private companies – is a central aspect of the 'new' inter- or transnational relations.

Since the late 1980s we are witnessing an explosion of various forms of regionalisms and regionalist projects more or less all over the world. The widening and deepening of the European Union (EU) is perhaps the most debated example of this trend. Other regionalization processes can be observed in other parts of the world as well, made visible through the (re)emergence, revitalization or expansion of regional projects and organizations, such as the Southern Common Market/*Comisión Sectorial para el Mercado Común del Sur* (Mercosur), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and so forth.

It is important to recognize that this renewed and worldwide trend of regionalism, often labelled 'the new regionalism', is not confined simply to formal inter-state regional organizations and institutions. On the contrary, the new regionalism is characterized by its multidimensionality, complexity, fluidity and non-conformity, and by the fact that it involves a variety of state and non-state actors, who often come together in rather informal

multi-actor coalitions. It is therefore now appropriate to speak of regionalisms in the plural rather than the singular. This plurality is true in terms of both the variety of regionalization processes and the 'new' theoretical approaches.

However, in spite of a proliferation of research and interest in various forms of regionalism, there is surprisingly little *theoretical* debate in this burgeoning field. Most research in the field is carried out on the basis of single cases or with a limited set of (comparative) cases. Often the purpose is descriptive or to provide historical and empirical rather than conceptual and theoretical insights. To the extent that current research seeks to generate and create new or revise old assumptions or explanations, this is often done in order to consolidate a particular theory or a limited set of theoretical approaches. What is missing in the study of regionalism is an attempt to bring together a variety of theories of new regionalism. In essence, in spite of being one of the dominating trends and fields in current international or global studies, to date there is no comprehensive theory-book for new regionalism.

*This book constitutes the first systematic attempt to bring together leading theories of new regionalism.* Major theorists in the field from around the world – Barry Buzan, Morten Bøås, Richard Falk, Andrew Gamble, Björn Hettne, Helge Hveem, Bob Jessop, Marianne Marchand, Percy Mistry, Iver Neumann, Anthony Payne, Timothy Shaw and Diana Tussie – develop their own distinctive theoretical perspectives, spanning new regionalism and world order approaches along with regional governance, liberal institutionalism and neoclassical development regionalism, to regional security complex theory and the region-building approach. They have all been associated over the years with a variety of disciplines, institutions, schools and debates and so bring a rich set of insights and connections to this pioneering project.

It should be said from the outset that the emphasis on theory by no means implies a neglect of the empirical worlds of regionalism. Theory can be a very practical tool. It enables us to make sense of the world. In fact, it is hardly possible to think systematically and scientifically about international relations and the new regionalism without theory. When we understand and build theories of new regionalism, we will automatically be able to understand more about the phenomenon of new regionalism itself. In fact, to most researchers (at least the theorists), these are two sides of the same coin.

One main purpose in proposing and assembling this collection is to reveal the pluralism and richness of theories of new regionalism. These tend to have divergent meta-theoretical and conceptual points of departure, different ways of producing knowledge and building theory as well as a concern with diverse research questions. Since one single theory cannot give a sufficient picture of the multiplicity of new regionalism, we necessarily have to recognize

and embrace a variety of theories. This is what makes the theoretical world of new regionalism so rich. The expectation is that this book will help to clarify differences as well as similarities between theories and approaches.

Another related purpose for this unique theoretical exercise is to overcome, or at least minimize, the fragmentation and division in the field of new regionalism. Too often theorists speak past each other, without really engaging with alternative theories and competing research results. In response, this volume aims also to contribute to a more productive debate between different theoretical standpoints, not least between mainstream and critical/non-orthodox theories. By facilitating theoretical interaction and comparison, the ambition is to move towards a common ground, which in turn can help in bringing the debate forward.

The volume contains a wide spectrum of partly overlapping and partly competing perspectives and theories of new regionalism. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to situate the theories in the broader theoretical landscape and also clarify some important similarities and differences between them. In so doing the next two sections concentrate on what is 'new' and what is 'regional' in the new regionalism, respectively. The third section considers the richness of theories of new regionalism, first and foremost in terms of the variety of types of theory and the research focuses that exist. Finally, the structure of the rest of the book is outlined.

### **What is new in the new regionalism?**

The term 'new regionalism' is now widely used in the debate. In order to understand more about what is 'new' in this new regionalism, one can differentiate between a variety of partly overlapping and partly competing distinctions and meanings. To begin, many scholars and policy-makers refer to the new regionalism as the *current wave* or era of regionalism (i.e. new in a temporal sense). However, cross-national/community interaction and interdependencies have existed far back in history (Mattli, 1999). Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11) argue that a 'regionalized world is therefore not a novelty, but an integrated part of human history'.

It is thus evident that often old regionalism and new regionalism are distinguished by referring to *waves or generations of regionalism*. Some theorists refer to the protectionist trend of the 1930s as the first main wave of regionalism. More frequently, however, it is argued that (voluntary and comprehensive) regionalism is predominantly a post-Second World War phenomenon. We may therefore speak of several generations and varieties of post-Second World War regionalism (Mistry, Chapter 7; cf. Hveem, 2000a). According to Hettne (and many others) there have been *two* main waves of regionalism, which are often referred to as the old and the new regionalism (Hettne, Chapter 2). The first wave had its roots in the devastating experience of inter-war nationalism and the Second World War. It emerged in Western

Europe in the late 1940s and, although exported to several other regions in the South, it died out in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The second wave began to emerge in the mid-1980s, again starting in Western Europe (with the White Paper and the Single European Act) and gradually turning into a more widespread phenomenon.

There are both continuities and similarities between old and new regionalism, so that when studying contemporary regionalism one can easily get a feeling of *déjà vu*. For instance, many regional projects and regional organizations were initiated during the era of old regionalism and then simply renewed or re-inaugurated (sometimes with a new name and sometimes with a few different members) in the 1980s and 1990s. Under such circumstances it is often difficult to separate the historical from the contemporary. In response to this, Hettne (1999: 8) argues that, rather than identifying a new era or new wave of regionalism, 'I find the identification of new patterns of regionalization (co-existing with older forms) more relevant', i.e. new regionalism in the empirical rather than the temporal sense.

This is closely related to the fact that we may also speak of new regionalism in a *spatial* sense, referring to a region, a real emerging region, that did not previously experience genuine regionalization or in which it was imposed from outside, more or less as a simple copy of the European integration model. As pointed out by Mittelman (2000: 113), '[t]he most important features of the new regionalism are its worldwide reach, extending to more regions, with greater external linkages'. Furthermore, compared to the old regionalism in the 1960s today's regionalism is not only emerging more or less all over the world, but it is often taking different shapes in different parts of the world. Whereas the old regionalism was generally specific with regard to objectives and content, and (often) had a narrow focus on preferential trade arrangements and security alliances, the number, scope, and diversity of the new regionalism has grown significantly during the last decade (Hettne, Chapter 2; Schulz *et al.*, 2001). In short, the new regionalism is both global and pluralistic, compared to the old regionalism, which was Eurocentric and narrow.

Furthermore, many new regionalism theories may perhaps be considered to be new also in that they highlight the close relationship between regionalism and the *extra-regional environment*, particularly globalization. In many ways this constitutes a break with the old regionalism theories, especially with the leading variant of neofunctionalism, which often tended to ignore the global environment, almost as if regions were insulated from the external world. In this regard, most observers in the field emphasize the fundamental difference between the old bipolar Cold War context of the old regionalism and the current context after the Cold War, in which the new regionalism is being played out. Having said so, however, there are many different interpretations regarding what constitutes the new context and particularly the implications for regionalism.

Regardless of how the global order is interpreted – i.e. whether we are supposed to live in a uni-, tri- or multi-polar world – there is a rather strong consensus in the field that the new regionalism is *extroverted rather than introverted*. This is also in contrast to many theories as well as policies during the old regionalism. In fact, the multifold relationships between globalization and regionalization are central to the understanding of the contours of the emerging world order. Undoubtedly and as this volume will show, there are a variety of perceptions and opinions of how globalization and regionalization relate to each other. Much of the debate in the early and mid-1990s tended to bring the old regionalism issue to the discussion table; namely whether regionalization was a stumbling-block or stepping-stone towards globalization and improved multilateralism. However, more or less all theorists in this volume have moved beyond such linearity and one-dimensional dilemmas, and often draw our attention to the multifaceted relationship between globalization and regionalization.

Finally and perhaps most important, the term ‘new regionalism’ is also relevant for theoretical reasons. It is a widely used theory-building strategy to add the prefix ‘new’ in order to distinguish theoretical novelties from previous frameworks: e.g. new conservatism, new political economy, new political science, new security, and so forth. ‘New regionalism’ is increasingly employed by a wide range of scholars adhering to many different theoretical traditions and perspectives. Although this has created some confusion, it is best understood as an indication of the richness of new regionalism theory; something which this volume seeks to capture.

It should be recognized that some theorists draw attention to the same or similar driving forces, motives and effects of regionalism as during the old regionalism some three decades ago (or before). Therefore many (mainstream) scholars do not use the term ‘new regionalism’ at all, or only to a limited extent. When it is used, then newness may first and foremost represent an adjustment to a different world order context, dominated by post-Cold War processes and globalization. This tends to make the term ‘new regionalism’ somewhat less useful (at least from a theoretical perspective).

Other scholars, such as Diana Tussie (Chapter 6), may emphasize the new global context but also make some theoretical adjustments, but within their paradigm, so to speak. Although Tussie does not make a clean break with her ‘previous’ association with liberal institutionalism, it can be argued that she develops it. By the same token, while, on the one hand, Percy Mistry (Chapter 7) challenges conventional regional economic integration theory, especially the static comparative framework, on the other hand he mainly seems to improve rather than do away with neoclassical economics. These cautious revisions, informed by the discipline of economics, can be contrasted with the more critical and heterodox theorists, who have few, if any, links to old regionalism theories and frameworks. Most of them do not even engage in a debate with the old regionalism theories. This explains



why the term 'new regionalism' is used most consistently by scholars associated with a rather loose body of thinking, broadly referred to as new or critical international political economy (IPE). Robert Cox (1996) is often referred to as one of the 'founding fathers' of this loose school of thought, although it was Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze (1991) who first advanced the call for a new IPE, which has also been referred to as heterodox or counterhegemonic IPE (see Hettne, 1995a and b; Gamble *et al.*, 1996; Hoogvelt, 1997; Neufeld, 1997; Mittelman, 2000).

### **What is regional in the new regionalism?**

The generic 'region' has occupied an important position in the geographical and social sciences. Historically it has been defined first and foremost as a space between the national and the local (municipality), primarily within particular states. These types of regions are here referred to as *micro-regions*, and they can exist within a particular state or be cross-border in nature. The concept of region can also refer to *macro-regions* (world regions), which are larger territorial (in contrast to non-territorial) units or sub-systems, between the state and the global system level. Finally, between the two levels there are *meso-regions*: mid-range state or non-state arrangements and processes.

In international studies, the macro-region has been the most common level or object of analysis. This is mainly explained by the fact that micro-regions have often been seen as part of the study of domestic and comparative politics and economics. In current international affairs, with its fuzzy borderline between the domestic and the international, micro-regions have increasingly become cross-border in nature (Jessop, Chapter 10). In this way, micro-regions have become intimately connected with globalization as well as other levels of regionalization. Several of the theories in this volume bridge the gap between the two separated discourses of macro-regionalism and micro-regionalism (Hettne, Chapter 2; Jessop, Chapter 10; also cf. Perkmann and Sum, 2002; Söderbaum, 2002; Grant and Söderbaum, 2003; Söderbaum and Taylor, 2003). In order to avoid confusion, however, henceforth in this collection the concept of region refers to macro-regions whereas micro- or meso-regions (sub-regions) will be referred to as such.

The concept of region stems from the Latin word 'regio', which means direction (Jönsson *et al.*, 2000: 15). It is also derived from the Latin verb 'regere': 'to rule' or 'to command'. Subsequently, region denoted border or a delimited space, often a province. Many disciplines and discourses have maintained a strong emphasis on 'territory' and 'rule' in the study and definition of regions. This has resulted in a considerable degree of research capacity being devoted to determining what types of regions are the most functional, instrumental and efficient (to rule). Often, especially in political science and economics, regions have been taken as pre-given, defined in

advance of research, and simply been seen as particular inter-state frameworks and intergovernmental regional organizations, or what Mistry (Chapter 7) refers to as Regional Integration Arrangements (RIAs) (cf. Tussie, Chapter 6).

Barry Buzan (Chapter 8) constitutes, however, a prolific example of a scholar who has tried (step-by-step) to transcend conventional definitions of regions. Buzan's classical definition of a 'regional security complex' was 'a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so inter-linked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another'. The updated definition of a regional security complex is now: 'a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another'. The revised theory is a reflection of Buzan's attempt to move beyond state-centric assumptions and also take into account the *constructivist* method. The units can be states, but also other units can be predominant, and security complexes are not givens but constructed in the process of securitization.

Other new regionalism theorists, who are more firmly based in the *constructivist, critical and post-structuralist* camp, further emphasize that regions must not be taken for granted; that they are not 'natural', objective, essential or simply material objects. In Hettne's (Chapter 2) view, regions are processes; they are in the making (or un-making); their boundaries are shifting – 'in the constructivist approach regions come to life as we talk and think about them'. According to Jessop (Chapter 10), 'rather than seek an elusive objective... criterion for defining a region, one should treat regions as emergent, socially constituted phenomena'. Neumann (Chapter 9) goes on to ask *whose region* is actually being constructed. In so doing he identifies a blank spot in much of (mainstream) regionalism research. All theories make assumptions about what a region is, but according to Neumann the mainstream theories tend to neglect the 'politics of defining and redefining the region'. The point, Neumann claims, is that 'this is an inherently political act, and it must therefore be reflectively acknowledged and undertaken as such'.

Just as there are different understandings of what is a region, there are also many contrasting and not always compatible definitions and conceptualizations of regionalism and regionalization. As a consequence, it is not possible to come up with definitions that all theorists subscribe to. Suffice it to underline the crucial distinction between regionalism and regionalization. Most theorists in this volume (but not all) define regionalism as the *ideas, identities and ideologies* related to a regional project, whereas regionalization is most often defined as the *process* of regional interaction creating a regional space (or the outcome). However, for instance, Gamble and Payne (Chapter 3) define regionalism as a states-led project, whereas regionalization is seen mainly as a societal and a non-state process. This is a slightly different view from that of scholars such as Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11),

who argue that 'regionalism is clearly a political project, but it is obviously not necessarily state-led, as states are not the only political actor around... we clearly believe that, within each regional project (official or not), several competing regionalizing actors with different regional visions and ideas coexist'.

Finally, it should be said that sometimes there is a belief or assertion that *regional integration* is fundamentally different from *regional cooperation*.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Christiansen (2001) argues that regional integration is happening in Europe, whereas regional (economic) cooperation is the category that best captures the regional phenomenon in the rest of the world. But, as Hettne (Chapter 2) points out, 'regional integration belongs to the discourse of the old regionalism'. Through their usage of regionalism/regionalization the scholars in this volume move beyond the narrow and somewhat artificial distinction between regional cooperation and regional integration. In so doing they are able to better account for the complexity and multidimensionality of current regionalism, involving cooperation and integration among a variety of actors and supported by a diversity of institutional frameworks in both formal and informal settings. Needless to say, the concepts of regional integration and regional cooperation can still be kept analytically distinct and under certain conditions they can provide powerful insights. However, there are many instances where they hide more than they reveal. In addition, often they need to be supplemented by 'regional systems', 'regional agreements' and above all the more general categories of 'regionalism' and 'regionalization'. Through this usage it is possible to bridge the existing divide between students of European integration and those of new and comparative regionalism.

## The richness of new regionalism theory

The term 'theory' has many different meanings. It must be clear from the outset that the theorists in this volume do not always adhere to the same understanding of what constitutes 'good theory'. There is no need, at least not in this book, for a misplaced universalistic definition of what formulation and definition of theory is to be preferred. On the contrary, this collection highlights the richness of new regionalism theory. Different theorists are engaged in different kinds of knowledge production and they also focus on different research questions – what below is discussed under the sections *types of theories* and *types of research focus* respectively. Before moving on, it needs mentioning that sometimes theorists are concerned with similar research questions but differ in terms of knowledge production, while at other times it may be vice versa.

### Types of theories

It must be underlined that the dividing line between an 'approach' and a 'theory' is by no means crystal-clear. Many orthodox 'scientists' would

probably not consider several of the frameworks elaborated in this volume to be 'theories', because they do not always stipulate a causal relation between independent and dependent variables. However, the independent/dependent causality is only one particular way to build theories. Equally important, several authors do not even consider their own frameworks to be theories. Instead they use the more open-ended label of 'approach', 'perspective' (Falk, Chapter 4) or 'pragmatic empiricism' (Mistry, Chapter 7).

Of course, one has to be clear about what type of theory (approach or perspective) one seeks to construct. Some theories are strictly causal and 'objective', in which 'facts' and 'theories' are separated, while others are based on different meta-theoretical foundations, thus being normative, constitutive, critical, post-structural or post-modern and so forth. There is no space (or need) to go into detail about all the individual theories in this volume. It suffices to distinguish between some broad categories, which will be helpful in grouping the different theories.<sup>2</sup>

One distinction, which has become widely used during the last decade, is that between 'rationalist' and 'reflectivist' approaches to international relations theory, with (mainstream) social constructivism occupying the 'middle ground' (Smith, 2001; cf. Adler, 1997). According to Smith (2001), rationalist theories refer to neorealism and neoliberalism, whereas the reflectivist position refers to a diverse group of theories, such as critical theory, historical sociology, post-structuralism, post-modernism, feminism and normative theory. Rationalist theories are based on rational choice and take the interests, ideas and identities of actors (which are seen as self-interested egos) as given, while reflectivists (as well as constructivists) focus on how inter-subjective practices between actors result in how interests, ideas and identities are formed in the process of social interaction (rather than prior to such interaction) (see more below).

A somewhat similar but yet different categorization is the distinction made by Cox (1995, 1996) between 'problem-solving' and 'critical' theory. The former takes the world as given (and on the whole as good) and provides guidance to correct dysfunctions or specific problems that arise within this existing order, whereas the latter is concerned with how the existing order came into being and the construction of strategies for structural and social change. Often critical theorists refer to Cox's by-now classic statement:

Theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space. The world is seen from a standpoint definable in terms of nation or social class, of dominance or subordination, of rising or declining power, of a sense of immobility or of present crisis, of past experience, and of hopes and expectations for the future. (Cox, 1986: 207)

To a large extent, there is an overlap between rationalist and problem-solving theories on the one hand, and the reflectivist and critical theories

on the other. However, the dividing line between rationalism/problem-solving and reflectivism/critical theories (or whatever categorization one may use) is by no means sharp. Still, these very broad categories provide some guidance as to where the individual theories/approaches in this volume 'belong'.

Clearly, the study of regionalism is dominated by various rationalist/problem-solving theories. Conventionally, the neorealists put heavy emphasis on national interests, security and power politics for the emergence of regions, whereas neoliberal institutionalists stress the role of institutions and regional organizations for managing interdependencies and achieving collective goods on a regional basis. In the study of regionalism since the 1990s, the various rationalist and problem-solving approaches have moved closer together. Not only do they often share a common epistemology and agree on some core assumptions – such as the anarchical system and the dominance of states as self-seeking egoists – they often focus on the variance of the institutionalization of regionalism and other rather specific issues, especially trade (Mansfield and Milner, 1997; Moravcsik, 1998; cf. Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995). One of the main differences is that neorealists emphasize structural and power-oriented variables, while neoliberal institutionalists give more weight to the regulating influence of regional institutions (inter-governmental regional organizations in particular).

Since the mid-1990s a series of reflectivist/critical approaches to regionalism have developed, to a large extent as a direct result of the strengthening of this type of scholarship more broadly (including constructivism). These approaches challenge core rationalist/problem-solving features, such as the separation of subject and object, fact and value, state-centric ontology and rationalist epistemology. Needless to say, there are a large number of different critical/reflectivist theories of new regionalism, which are somewhat difficult to lump together.<sup>3</sup> At least to some extent their common denominator is their dissatisfaction with mainstream and rationalist theories. As Neumann (Chapter 9) points out with regard to his own region-building approach, 'instead of adopting the accepting attitude inherent in many [mainstream]... approaches, it insists on an un-accepting, irreverent and therefore invariance-breaking attitude'.

Another important distinction, already touched upon above, relates to how different theories look upon *the way interests, ideas and identities are formed*. This follows, first and foremost, the rationalist versus reflectivist categories. The rationalist schools of thought 'share a view of the world of international relations in utilitarian terms: an atomistic universe of self-regarding units whose identity is assumed given and fixed, and who are responsive largely if not solely to material interests that are stipulated by assumption' (Ruggie, 1998: 3). 'They assume interests exist rather than explain how interests occur' (Higgott, 1998a: 50). As Hveem (Chapter 5) points out, the rationalist and so-called neo-utilitarian assumptions can certainly be both relevant and useful. For instance, corporate regionalization

is normally motivated by the maximization of utility, such as economic growth or increasing rents. The utility-maximization motive may also cover non-economic goals. Mistry (Chapter 7) makes a powerful argument in favour of utility-driven and problem-solving regionalism, with regard to both state and market actors. He shows how the new regionalism can be an effective risk-management strategy or occur because multilateralism does not work. In many ways, this is in line with Tussie's argument (Chapter 6) that regionalism is a risk-minimization strategy and thrives in the policy spaces left by multilateralism, thereby providing a substance to multilateralism.

Reflectivists and constructivists challenge strict rationalist (mainly materialist and utility-based) assumptions, and they do not take interests, ideas and identities as given. As Neumann (Chapter 9) points out, 'instead of postulating a given set of interests that actors are supposed to harbour before their social interaction with other collectives, the region-building approach investigates interests where they are formulated' (which in Neumann's case means in 'discourse'). This is related to the fact that reflectivists postulate that actors' interests and choices are developed according to a different rationality, with a broader set of variables than assumed by the logic of 'rational choice' and 'economic man'. From this perspective, agency is often motivated and explained by ideas, identity, accumulation of knowledge and learning rather than by traditional routines, structural factors or established institutions.

The architects of the world order approach (WOA), Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne (Chapter 3), underline the need to go beyond materialist definitions of power and insert ideas into the standard framework, which in their view makes their framework substantially more nuanced than mainstream and rationalist approaches. In Chapter 11, Bøås, Marchand and Shaw argue that the understanding of agency must go beyond preconceived ideas based upon *homo economicus* – rational economic man. Rather, the activities of the agents need to be placed in a social context. Hettne (Chapter 2) challenges economic man from a different perspective. Following Karl Polanyi, Hettne insists on the 'natural' (moral man) to regain power over the 'unnatural' (economic man).

Finally, although many authors in this volume deal (explicitly or implicitly) with the *structure–agency problem*, it is still possible to differentiate between those who are leaning towards structural and macro-oriented explanations and those who are more agency- and micro-oriented. Some scholars are particularly concerned with historical structures and the construction of world orders, while other analysts are more interested in the particularities of agencies and lived social spaces. There is no need to be dogmatic about what position and balance between structure and agency (or macro versus micro) to prefer; or exactly how to balance structure–agency, because to a large extent it is closely related to differences in meta-theoretical position as well as the research focus. It is, for instance, difficult to provide a coherent and graspable analysis of long-term structural transformation processes

focusing mainly on a multiplicity of lived agencies and micro-processes. On the other hand, sometimes structural analyses have difficulty providing detailed insights/explanations of the specificities and details of agents and events on the ground. Here it is important to recognize that, as Neumann points out, different assumptions may be chosen to illuminate different aspects of regional politics, and different perspectives and their concomitant narratives often tend to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In a fascinating section in his chapter, Neumann illustrates this by using two different sets of theoretical assumptions in the construction of two widely differing narratives of the Northern European region. In a rather similar manner, and in an attempt to move beyond the new regionalism approach (NRA), Hettne (Chapter 2) seeks to understand regionalism 'both from an *endogenous perspective*, according to which regionalization is shaped from within the region by a large number of different actors, and an *exogenous perspective*, according to which regionalization and globalization are intertwined articulations, contradictory as well as complementary, of global transformation'.

Several theorists in this volume employ a post-structural perspective and/or agency- and micro-oriented perspectives. Hveem (Chapter 5), for instance, claims 'that the new regionalism is determined more by agency and less by structure'. Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11) deliberately employ an actor-oriented approach to the study of regions, which focuses on entrepreneurial action. In their view, 'to study entrepreneurial action is to make microscopic readings of how the regional order ticks'. From this perspective it becomes important to try to understand how actors perceive their reality and how they seek to deal with it. The three co-authors propose that 'such a research strategy may enable us to incorporate into our analysis a whole range of dimensions and practices which hitherto have been considered outside the domain of political and economic research and the study of regionalization'.

### **Types of research focus**

The relationship between globalization/multilateralism and regionalization constitutes one of the main research concerns in the field, for rationalists and reflectivists alike. As indicated above, this contrasts with many old regionalism theories, which were heavily concerned with the endogenous forces of regional integration. Many theorists in this volume, especially but not only the reflectivist/critical ones, emphasize *the diversity of relationships between globalization and regionalization*. Hveem (Chapter 5) draws attention to the multifaceted relations between them, arguing that a regional project can ride on, reinforce, reject, hinder or hedge globalization. Jessop (Chapter 10) highlights a large number of micro-regional and rescaling activities that lead to new cross-border micro-regions – all of which are closely related and occurring within contexts of both globalization and macro/meso-regionalization.

Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11) argue that we are dealing with different layers and overlapping processes and nexuses of globalization and regionalization simultaneously – what they refer to as the weave-world.

A series of other interesting comparisons can be made between different theorists. The *normative understanding of the relationships between globalization/multilateralism and regionalization* is particularly interesting. Gamble and Payne (Chapter 3) are very clear that much of today's regionalism is open regionalism, and as such it tends to reinforce the detrimental effects of economic globalization and global capitalism. Gamble and Payne believe that there is a long way to go before new regionalism contributes to social regulation and social control. Similarly, Hettne (Chapter 2) sees (economic) globalization as a strong and in some of its dimensions irreversible force, with deep implications for regionalism. Both these approaches consider economic globalization as a highly uneven process and both seek to reveal power relations behind this grand process. However, Gamble and Payne (Chapter 3) consider today's regionalism primarily as a manifestation of economic globalization and prevailing forms of hegemony (i.e. as neoliberal/open regionalism), whereas Hettne is more enthusiastic about the regional phenomenon. Hettne applies the thinking of Karl Polanyi (1944) in order to understand the emergence of the new regionalism in the current world order context dominated by economic globalization. Following Polanyi, Hettne argues that the dialectics of market expansion and attempts at political intervention in defence of civil society constitute the basic forces of societal change. Seen from this perspective the new regionalism represents the 'return of the political': that is, interventions in favour of crucial values, among which development, security and peace, and ecological sustainability are the most fundamental.

There are several theorists in this volume who draw attention to the (real and potential) *positive impact of regionalism*. Just like the previous pair of approaches, Richard Falk (Chapter 4) anticipates that regionalism can be negative and that it is often synchronized with open regionalism (meaning that 'negative regionalism' can reinforce 'negative globalism'). Similarly to Hettne but in contrast to much of what Gamble and Payne argue, however, Falk believes that 'positive regionalism' can be an instrument *against* 'negative globalism'. Likewise, in general, liberal theorists tend to be rather optimistic concerning the 'positive' potential of new regionalism. Mistry (Chapter 7) argues that, in contrast to conventional economic integration theory, the new regionalism is not a second-best but actually a first-best solution in response to dysfunctional multilateralism and globalism. Tussie (Chapter 6) also emphasizes that regional projects can give market access, which at least the South wished for but was never able to get through multilateralism. Finally, one of Hveem's (Chapter 5) main points is that regional governance has comparative political advantages compared to multilateral and global governance.



One important difference in research focus between various theories in this volume is what each of them identify as the principal unit of analysis, and *who the regionalizing actors or region-builders are*. As already mentioned, historically the study of regionalism has been very state-centric. At least to some extent this is for good reason. Most states in the world have been or are part of, or are joining, several regionalist projects. They do so for a rich variety of reasons, which means that state-driven regionalism continues to deserve and demand a great deal of research attention. There is no doubt about the fact that we need to know more about how and why states are creating regionalism and the dynamics of intergovernmental institutions, which certainly makes it both legitimate and relevant still to focus on states as actors in the process of regionalization. Some theories/approaches (Gamble and Payne, Chapter 3; Tussie, Chapter 6; Mistry, Chapter 7; Neumann, Chapter 9) are first and foremost geared towards the analysis of states and inter-state frameworks, although these authors certainly differ about the incentives behind regionalism/regionalization.

Many new regionalism theories seek, however, to go *beyond a focus on states as the main regionalizing actors*. Hettne (Chapter 2) is very clear on the difference between old and new regionalism in this regard: '[w]hereas the old [regionalism] was concerned with relations between a group of neighbouring nation-states, the new [regionalism] formed part of a global structural transformation, or globalization, in which also a variety of non-state actors were operating at several levels of the global system.' The implication for Hettne is that the focus on the multitude of actors points beyond a state-centric approach. Here it should be mentioned that the anticipated need to go beyond a state-centric approach is intimately related to the understanding of the state and its role in world politics. In contrast to those theorists who emphasize state-led regional projects, for instance Gamble and Payne (Chapter 3), Hettne points to the weakened capacity of the state and the consequent unlikelihood of a conventional redistributive solution at the national level and within particular state-society complexes. As already mentioned, Hettne extends Polanyian ideas about the (potential) political role of civil society as a means for the weak and the poor to protect themselves (cf. Mittelman, 2000). Without doubt, it is contested whether this is really happening or not.

In accordance with several other theorists in this volume, Hveem (Chapter 5) draws attention to transnational regionalization, which falls into two sub-categories: corporate and societal regionalization. Similarly, according to Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11), '[t]he state is most often one of the regionalizing actors, but equally important actors can be identified within the two other realms of the state-society-economy triangle: NGOs, new social movements, media, companies as well as a range of actors based in the second economy of the informal sector'. In their view, this is part of the reason why new regionalism is such a pluralistic phenomenon, in terms of differences in practice, theory as well as identity of regionalizing actors.

The emphasis on a pluralism of state and non-state actors is closely related to the distinction between *formal and informal (real) dimensions* of new regionalism. Some theorists are heavily geared towards the formal (and even formalistic) dimension of new regionalism, while others give more attention to informal aspects. Some analysts consider both aspects. For instance, Hettne (Chapter 2) makes a distinction between the formal and the real region. The former (*de jure*) is the formally organized region, defined most easily by the membership of the dominant formal regional organizations and inter-state frameworks. In order to assess the relevance, the substance and future potential of the formal region, it should be related to the latter (*de facto*) region, which has to be defined in terms of more informal and less visible and less precise criteria. When the formal and the real region converge, the result is increasing levels of 'regionness' (cf. Hettne, 1999; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000).

Both the formal and informal are considered by Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11). However, they tend to lean more towards the informal side. In their view, '[a]gency is socially embedded and based upon relations both in formal and informal spheres of society, and often the distinction between formal and informal is purely cosmetic'. The essence of their argument can be seen in the following quote:

There is so much more to current regionalization processes than whatever can be captured by a focus on states and formal regional organization. In many parts of the world, what feeds people, organizes them and constructs their worldview is not the state and its formal representations (at local, national or regional levels), but the informal sector and its multitude of networks, civil societies and associations (again at many levels). Of course, people participate not solely in the formal or the informal sector. Rather, they move in and out of both, and it is precisely these kinds of interactions and the various forms of regionalism that they create which studies of regionalization should try to capture. (Bøås, Marchand and Shaw, Chapter 11)

## Structure of the book

There are many alternative ways to structure a collection of this kind. One possibility is to arrange authors according to their theoretical and paradigmatic association or identity. However, as should be evident from the sections above, our theorists are not always easily 'labelled' or categorized into neat paradigmatic 'boxes'. As in most other discourses, theories about new regionalism tend to be complex and multifaceted. For instance, should Hettne (Chapter 2) be seen as a critical or structural IPE theorist, a historical sociologist, a constructivist, or perhaps a Polanyian disciple? And how would he define himself? Should Buzan (Chapter 8) be considered a neorealist,

a follower of the 'English school' (and, if so, how to 'label' this school?), or is he best understood as a representative of a particular kind of constructivism? By the same token, should Bøås, Marchand and Shaw (Chapter 11) be seen as proponents of a particular critical political economy, a realism in the tradition of Carr, or a post-modern or at least a post-structuralist stance?

Instead of trying to 'label' the theorists, the preferred solution for this volume is to arrange them in rather loose sets of 'clusters'. In the next section I focus on groups or *clusters* of cognate contributions, and then conclude by describing each of the dozen *chapters* rather than the four clusters.

### Clusters

The first cluster groups Hettne, Gamble and Payne, and Falk, as they all share some broad reflectivist and critical theory postulates in combination with their common focus on the construction of world orders. The next cluster consists of Hveem, Tussie, and Mistry. Somewhat similar to the first group, this trio of theorists share a concern with global governance and the way the world is organized. However, in contrast to the former they tend to be less focused on critical and normative aspects and are more concerned with 'problem-solving' matters such as the efficacy, legitimacy and functionality of multilateral versus regional organizations.

The third cluster groups Buzan and Neumann. At first sight, this pair may look like an uneasy couple, but they actually share some interesting similarities as well as differences. Buzan emphasizes a combination of outside-in and inside-out analysis, which Neumann also elaborates on in detail. In fact, Neumann argues that Buzan's regional security complex theory is one of the most useful approaches in the field, but that it contains a blind spot in that it fails to problematize *whose region* is being constructed. Furthermore, in the updated version of the regional security complex theory, Buzan has moved towards the constructivist method. Neumann also builds on constructivism, but certainly of a different kind compared to that of Buzan.

The fourth and final cluster groups Jessop, on the one hand, and Bøås, Marchand and Shaw, on the other. (To some extent, Neumann could fit into this cluster as well.) These scholars particularly emphasize post-structuralist theorizing, and they draw attention to a whole series of regionalizing strategies and regionalizing actors, who meet, interact and sometimes compete. In their view, regions are constructed and tightly interwoven with global and national level processes and practices, so there should be no singular or one-dimensional understanding of new regionalism.

### Chapters

What follows below is a brief presentation of all the individual chapters. In Chapter 2, 'The New Regionalism Revisited', Björn Hettne takes the new regionalism approach (NRA) as his point of departure, according to which the new regionalism is defined as a comprehensive, multidimensional,

political phenomenon, including economics, security, environment and other issues. In a rather ambitious attempt to 'move beyond' the NRA, Hettne combines the exogenous and the endogenous processes of regionalization. The conventional NRA was primarily based on an exogenous perspective, whereby globalization and regionalization were seen as intertwined articulations, contradictory as well as complementary, of global transformation. In this chapter, Hettne adds the endogenous perspective, which more strongly underlines the role of agency and the long-term transformation of territorial identities. Thereafter, Hettne goes on to emphasize the political content of the new regionalism, whereby the new regionalism is seen as a 'return of the political' (i.e. how various world order models relate to the new regionalism). Finally, in considering the future of regionalism the possibility of global human community should not be excluded, Hettne argues, but a regional political community is logically prior to it. Coexisting regional communities or even inter-regionalism (rather than asymmetric multilateralism) may be the best world order we can hope for in the medium term.

In Chapter 3, 'The World Order Approach', Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne start out by rejecting the mainstream postulates of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. Heavily indebted to the critical IPE associated with Robert Cox, Gamble and Payne emphasize that globalization and the ideological power, or even 'triumph', of capitalism has established a new context within which regionalism has to be rethought. The central puzzle for them is to what extent states (and particular state/society complexes) respond to globalization and the new global context by building state-led regionalist schemes. Although Gamble and Payne are critical of much really existing regionalism – due to the fact that it is seen as 'open regionalism' – they still see a potential for state-driven regional projects to mitigate the negative effects of globalization and free market capitalism, and contribute to a new era of social regulation and community (especially if managed in an enlightened way and if opened up to the influences and interests of labour and civil society more broadly).

In the fourth chapter, entitled 'Regionalism and World Order: The Changing Global Setting', Richard Falk assesses the actual and potential contributions of regionalism to the achievement of crucial world order values, such as peace, social justice, human rights and democracy. Any such assessment depends on the global setting in which regionalism is played out, which has changed dramatically through, first, the ending of the Cold War and, second, September 11. According to Falk, regionalism is a welcome trend insofar as it contains 'negative globalism', and mitigates 'pathological anarchism' as well as the 'empire-building' project of the United States. Particular attention is given to those real and potential situations where 'positive regionalism' can support 'positive globalism' and vice versa. Falk claims that a democratically conditioned regionalism may, at least for some

people, provide a world order compromise between statism and globalism that has indispensable benefits for the circumstances of humanity.

Helge Hveem argues convincingly – in Chapter 5, ‘The Regional Project in Global Governance’ – that the world is in need of better governance, and that in the present world this means regional modes of governance. Hveem’s main argument is that the strength of regional governance projects depends on whether they enjoy a comparative political advantage in resolving global governance problems. If such comparative advantage exists, it is to do with efficacy and identity but above all with legitimacy and viability. Hveem analyzes the driving forces and motivations of key actors in the creation of a rich variety of both formal and states-led as well as corporate and societal modes of regionalization and regional governance. Attention is also given to the dynamics of inter-regionalism.

In the sixth chapter, ‘Regionalism: Providing a Substance to Multilateralism?’, Diana Tussie challenges liberal institutionalism ‘from within’, so to speak. Regionalism in world trade has both positive and negative implications for liberalization and for multilateralism, meaning that there is no clear-cut choice between regionalism and international trade. Most literature on international trade and regionalism looks at the links between regionalism and multilateralism as a one-dimensional dilemma between stumbling-blocks and stepping-stones/building-blocks. In such a formulation, researchers fail to capture the impact of multilateralism on regionalism. One of Tussie’s main arguments is that regionalism thrives in the policy spaces left by multilateralism and that, at the same time, when these lacunae are too numerous and wide these tensions are replayed in the multilateral sphere. Regionalism provides substance for multilateralism as, at least for the South, regional arrangements provide an opportunity for market access these countries always wished for but had never really been able to extract from unilateral negotiations.

In Chapter 7, ‘New Regionalism and Economic Development’, Percy Mistry provides a powerful challenge to the mainstream and orthodox theory of regional economic integration, particularly the static comparative framework. In a manner akin to many other new regionalist theorists in this volume, Mistry calls for a rethinking of economic integration and emphasizes the need for theory that embraces ‘politics, economics, security and culture as key dimensions of the new regionalism’. However, Mistry laments the lack of an adequate multidisciplinary and holistic theory of regionalism. As a step in that direction he argues for ‘pragmatic empiricism’ and an empirical analysis of the history of regional integration arrangements (RIAs) in the South and of presently unfolding practical experience. The new regionalism has, according to Mistry, emerged as a response to new risks in the global economy and as a strategy to achieve broad social and political (and economic) objectives. In particular, new regionalism is being embraced because old multilateralism no longer works. Multilateralism is dysfunctional

because it has been 'hijacked' by the OECD and G7 governments. Plus it also depends on interactions among nation-states that have become so unequal that they have ceased to be meaningful units on which multilateralism can reasonably rely for effective functioning.

In Chapter 8, 'Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World', Barry Buzan starts out with a summary of traditional regional security complex theory (RSCT), with its military-political focus, and looks at whether it is still relevant in the post-Cold War world. Thereafter, Buzan updates the RSCT with a new definition of regional security complexes in order to take account of the formal switch to the constructivist method and to move away from state-centric assumptions. He argues that the constructivist approach is necessary if one is to keep the concept of security coherent while adding 'new security sectors' – economic, environmental and societal – beyond the traditional military and political ones. Buzan investigates the extent of regionalizing logic in the three 'new' security sectors and whether and how it works. There is also a discussion over the merits of treating sectors separately – i.e. distinguishing between a series of often overlapping regional security complexes in different sectors – or amalgamating them into single, multi-sectoral regional security complexes.

In Chapter 9, 'A Region-Building Approach', Iver B. Neumann outlines a post-structural approach, which can be understood as an application of a Self/Other perspective to the political project of building regions. One of Neumann's central arguments is that the establishment of regions is preceded by region-builders: i.e. political actors who, as part of some political project, see it as in their interest to imagine and construct a region. Although regions are seen as 'imagined communities', cultural similarities and ties are not in and of themselves politically relevant, but are made relevant by political actors in order to serve some political cause. The region-building approach seeks to go to the root of where, by whom and for whom region-building statements and strategies are formulated and made relevant – in other words, *whose* region is being constructed. Neumann makes the point that it is particularly important to understand the dynamics whereby region-builders seek to present themselves as the 'imagined centre' of a particular region.

In the tenth chapter, 'The Political Economy of Scale and the Construction of Cross-Border Micro-Regions', Bob Jessop shows that since the early 1980s the construction of cross-border micro-regions is best understood in the broader context of 'the relativization of scale'. He argues that the proliferation of spatial and temporal horizons linked to the relativization of scale, including different forms and results of globalization, involves very different challenges and threats for economic, political and social forces from those that prevailed when the national scale and territorial statehood were dominant. Different scalar processes and strategies often combine to form more complex networks or strategies as well as tangled hierarchies of regions. In a

fascinating exposé, Jessop highlights the many different ways in which cross-border regions have emerged in the new era. There are many micro-regional varieties, policy-directed, informal and spontaneous, and hence no single micro-regional strategy is likely to predominate. Instead there will be a large number of strategies, places and scales.

In the penultimate chapter, 'The Weave-World: The Regional Interweaving of Economies, Ideas and Identities', Morten Bøås, Marianne Marchand and Timothy Shaw emphasize the close relationship between globalization and regionalization. This is similar to many other theorists in this volume and the field more generally. But what differentiates their approach from others is the deliberate focus on how nexuses of globalization and regionalization have created a whole range of diversified patterns of interactions and responses at the local, national and regional level: i.e. the creation of weave-worlds. Against this background it is, in their view, important that the processes of global restructuring to which these terms apply are addressed in the plural instead of their singular form in order to reflect their multidimensionality. This term should also not be pinned onto one specific type of actor (most often the state), but should rather reflect the activities of and interactions between states, firms and community (groups) as well as NGOs and new social movements.

In the final chapter, 'Conclusion: What Futures for New Regionalism?', the editors highlight some main themes of the book, and underline important similarities and differences between the theories in order to facilitate communication and comparison. Integral to this is to look at where the field may be moving in the first decade of the new millennium. There is also some discussion of the gaps or silences in the contemporary theoretical landscape as well as consideration of the impacts of new regionalism on established disciplines (as well as vice versa). These aspects are important not only for theoretical reasons, but for their relevance for policy and practice as well as analysis.

## Notes

1. In a general sense, regional integration is seen as 'forming parts into a whole', but in a more concrete sense at least political scientists tend to highlight the establishment of supranational (regional) institutions and their independent activities, for instance the European Commission or the Court. Regional cooperation is more open-ended and less demanding, generally referring to the fact that actors may cooperate in order to achieve common objectives in one area in spite of conflicting interests and objectives in another.
2. For other theoretical overviews of regional theories, see Hettne *et al.* (1999), Hout (1999), Hurrell (1995) and Söderbaum (2002). See also this volume's A Guide to Further Reading for some of the most important books in the field of new regionalism.
3. In this context it should be mentioned that the rationalist and problem-solving theories are comprehensive 'schools of thought' with a massive research

output, while the reflectivist and critical approaches are more flexible, exploratory and even provisory theoretical constructs. Furthermore, the latter group consists of a much more limited number of scholars and theorists, who often interact in overlapping and interactive research networks.



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