


Seminários de Estudos de Desenvolvimento 2023
Development Studies Seminars 2023

A Discussion of the Grammars and Languages of Regionalisms in the Wake of Covid-19 Pandemic and the War in Ukraine
Presenter: Daniel C. Bach, Centre Emile Durkheim, Sciences Po Bordeaux

28 de março, 18h-20h | March 28, 6pm-8pm (UTC)
Local/Venue: ISEG (Anfiteatro 23, Francesinhas 1)
<https://cesa.rc.iseg.ulisboa.pt/>



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1. (Introduction) The golden decade of the 1990s in retrospect

- The (largely unanticipated) rise of a “world of [core] regions” (Katzenstein) from the late 1980s onwards; focus on trade, investment and research (the triad)
- The “world of regions” entangled with a “world of regionalisms” (Bach, 2016)
 - New awareness of the diversify of patterns and processes associated with region-building and/or regionalisation processes (the languages of regionalism)
 - Overarching goals and norms (the grammars)

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1. The golden decade of the 1990s... (cont'd)

- **1.1. A ‘new’ grammar:** the end of the cold war in Europe and the triumph of the ‘international liberal order’
 - APEC’s ‘open’ regionalism
 - Wave of regional Free Trade Agreements (FTA) endorsed by GATT/WTO
 - Three ‘core’ regions: reassessment of the potential of network-led as opposed to state-driven integration
- **1.2. A ‘world of regionalisms’**(Bach): the diversity of languages
 - The shift away from (Eurocentric) integration theories
 - Regionalism/regionalisation as a substitute
 - The region as a socially constructed space, associated with cognitive representations (mental maps).
 - Distinctive threads
- **1.3. Fresh disciplinary inputs**
 - Constructivism, IPE, border studies...
 - The UNU WIDER (4 vols) project on “new regionalism[s]” (Bjorn Hettne, Andras Inotai and Oswaldo Sunkel)
 - The dilution of of ‘New regionalism’ into comparative regionalism studies

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1. The golden decade of the 1990s... (cont'd)

1.4 The agenda for today’s presentation

- Review developments over past two decades with respect to the grammars and languages of regionalism (also test for the “Africa as a crucible” thesis – see Bach, 2016)
- Discuss what is to be learnt from the dynamics at play within and across the post-soviet space (comparative perspective)



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2. The languages of XXI century regionalism

- **2.1. Still relevant: the 5 threads/ideal-types**
 - Amalgamation, hysteresis and decoupling (material and cognitive representations associated with colonialism/imperial rule)
 - Regionalism as sovereignty and territorial status enforcement (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, NATO, ...)
 - Regionalism as integration through sovereignty pooling: ongoing diffusion of the EU as the global script
 - Network led integration without region-building (the lure of the frontier)
 - Defragmentation and connectivity (mega regional agreements: RECP, AfCFTA, BRI)

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2. The languages of XXI century regionalism (cont'd)

- **2.2. XXI century regionalism**
 - The rise of 'post hegemonic regionalism' in Latin America
 - Towards Yet defragmentation and connectivity still on the agenda in Africa and Asia (AfCFTA, RECP, BRI)
 - The dissolution of 'new' regionalism into 'comparative regionalism'
 - Disillusions generated by stalled multilateral trade negotiations
 - Ambition of key players to become norms makers (BRI)

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3 The resilience of (not really) old grammars and debates

- **3.1. The stepping stone/stumbling bloc debate (Helge Hveem)**
 - *Regionalism as a stepping stone*
 - *Regionalism as a stumbling bloc*

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3. The resilience of (not really) old grammars and debates(cont'd)

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- **3.2. Institutionally driven (sovereignty pooling) versus lean integration (open and network-led regionalisation)**
 - Ongoing diffusion of the EU as a model, and the global script for regional economic integration
 - Institution-building associated with strategic et security related agendas (« the change through trade mantra »)
 - Broadening of the agendas of the ECOWAS and the other RECs (early 1990s onward)
 - The end of the EU's 'change through trade' mantra (North stream 2 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine)

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3. The resilience of (not really) old grammars and debates(cont'd)

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- **3.3 Endorsement vs redrawing inherited colonial boundaries in Africa**
 - the Monrovia group/Casablanca debate in the early 1960s
 - The endorsement of the sanctity of colonial boundaries in the OAU charter (1963) and AU Treaty (2001)
 - Ongoing polarization within the AU: Morocco incorporation/occupation of Western Sahara (former Spanish Rio de Oro)
 - Stoking the “embers of dead empires”? Martin Kilmazni’s call to Vladimir Putin at the UN security Council (21 February 2021) // with Balewa in 1960.

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Martin Kilmani, ambassador to the UN, drawing a parallel with Africa’s post-colonial legacy (21 February 2022)

“Our borders were not of our own drawing. They were drawn in the distant colonial metropolises of London, Paris and Lisbon with no regard for the ancient nations that they cleaved apart...

At independence had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic racial, or religious homogeneity, we would still be waiting bloody wars these many decades later. Instead, we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited. But we would still pursue continental political, economic and legal integration. Rather than form nations that looked ever backward into history, with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our many nations and peoples had ever known....

We believe that all states formed from empires that have collapsed or retreated have many people in them yearning for integration with peoples in neighbouring states. This is normal and understandable. ...

We reject irredentism and expansionism on any basis, including racial, ethnic, religious or cultural factors. We reject it again today.”

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3. The resilience of (not really) old grammars and debates(cont'd)

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- **3.4 Redrawing imperial boundaries in the post-soviet space**
 - A “relatively peaceful dissolution” (Kortunov): ‘decoupling’ (Smith), “imperial deconstruction” and/or decolonisation? (land vs maritime empires?)

Imperial deconstruction and the emergence of new statehoods were dampened for “at least a generation” by “...economic ties, transportation and logistics, infrastructure, standards of education science culture, and most importantly,...the mentality of the political and business élites.” (Kortunov)

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3.4 Redrawing imperial boundaries in the post-soviet space

- From the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to the notion of ‘near abroad’
 - CIS: Parallel with the British Commonwealth, the Franco-African Community, France ‘pre carré’ in the early 1990s ?)
 - Contested neighbourhoods: the Eurasian Economic Union (1991) as the nemesis of the EU
 - The lure of EU (and NATO) membership
 - The failure to convert Soviet imperial domination into hegemonic control (hysteresis)?

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3.4 Redrawing imperial boundaries in the post-soviet space (cont'd)

- *The resurgence of imperial grammars and mental maps*
- *Territorial status quo consolidation at bay: the invasion of Ukraine*
 - Dysfunctional trajectory of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict; shortfalls of Russia's ambitions to perform as a regional hegemon; loss of trust generated by the war in Ukraine (violation of the territorial integrity of a member-state of the UN)
 - The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): rise of China as the norms maker at the expense of Russia).

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Russia and its 'near abroad'

The Guardian, 11 March 2023



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4. Final remarks

"Broadly speaking, regionalism has always been with us. Regions as empire, spheres of influence, or just powerful states and their allies, have dominated in different international systems (Louise Fawcett, 2001: 436).

- Regionalisation without region-building (trans-state networks; rebordereing as an incentive to cross border integration)
- Regionalism as the vector of a global project: China's BRI
- The Post-Soviet space and the invasion of Ukraine (regionalism entangled with a nation-building project).

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