



# ATLANTIC FUTURE

## SCIENTIFIC PAPER

23

### **Regionalism and Interregionalism: The case of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In their extra-regional outreach Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa rarely make each other a priority. However, since the end of the Cold War there has been an increasing amount of political efforts to strengthen ties on a region-to-region basis. This paper argues that this rapprochement has been facilitated by the emergence of two regional projects following a similar logic in a post-Cold War context: the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market of the Southern Cone. At the same time, both projects face serious limitations of actorness that are illustrative of the confined space for interregionalism across the South Atlantic. An analysis of the formalised initiatives on political, economic and trade issues between the two regions concludes that these are characterised by transregional and partly pure forms of interregionalism and that most initiatives are heavily shaped by the leading role of Brazil.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyse the growing interregional relations between Latin America and Africa as well as the relevant regionalisms in this context. Due to the study of interregionalism, there will be a focus on the regionalisms with notable interregional ties. The regionalisms of concern are therefore located on the shores of the South Atlantic, in South America and in Southern Africa. The stimulation of interregional dialogue within the Atlantic space mainly concerns the actors within the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) in South America and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) while other layers of regionalism such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, the Pacific Alliance or the Economic Community of Central African States have been less concerned with such ambitions.

In a broader sense, regionalisms emerge from existing or desired interactions and interdependences (Söderbaum 2004: 16). Their regional character stems from transcending established notions of nation and community and aiming to institutionalise a new form of inclusion and exclusion. Belonging to a region can be framed in geographic, ideological, functional, historic or social terms (or a combination of those). Regionalism embraces a “series of interlinked, but distinct, phenomena” (Gardini 2012: 51) while providing an ideational sphere for projects following a region-making paradigm. The most tangible form of regionalism is its institutionalisation in a regional organisation; however, such projects can take many other forms, involving high degrees of informality, non-state actors as driving forces and imaginations rather than implementation. The underlying regionalisms in Southern Africa and South America, which have driven the process of interregionalism, largely stem from state actors that have both the capacity and the ambition to outgrow the traditional region.

The phenomenon of interregionalism, which will be further outlined in part 3, stems from the intensification and institutionalisation of regionalisms across the globe.

Before proceeding to interregionalism, part 2 will therefore deal in detail with the most relevant regional-building processes in Africa and Latin America in terms of their Atlantic dimension. These processes emerged in the 1990s with MERCOSUR in South America and SADC in Southern Africa. Both incorporated an economic paradigm shift to liberalism and the fear to be left behind in a tri-polar world order between Europe, North America and East Asia. MERCOSUR and SADC played a crucial role in providing the main arenas for regionalism in their sub-regions. They include the major states such as Brazil, Argentina and later Venezuela in the first case and South Africa, Angola and Mozambique in the second one. At the time of their creation MERCOSUR and SADC made it their core task to deepen trade relations between their members, without much space for a social agenda or ambitions to developing relations with other regions (with the exception of donor relations, specifically in the case of SADC). The main state actors in the creation and process of regionalism have been the heads of states as well as ministries for economy and foreign affairs. In the course of 1990s, transnational business and civil society started to perceive MERCOSUR and SADC as relevant spaces of interaction and governance. They have contributed to certain aspects of regionalism related to their own activities but in many cases they have also shifted their attention to other arenas that are more conducive to their objectives.

The notion of different regionalist sequences triggered by crises in turn deals with the conditions for certain types of regionalism and is particularly relevant to understand the oscillations in the forms and logics of regionalisms of the following chapter (Riggiozzi and Tussie 2012, Fioramonti 2012).

## 2. Regionalisms in Latin America and Southern Africa

### 2.1 Historic region-building: continuities, cycles and ruptures

In both regions, imperial constructs were replaced by politically independent nation-states – a diachronic process happening in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Latin America and after World War II in Africa. The formation of nation-states was accompanied by attempts to form more inclusive regions (Bolivarism in Latin America, Pan-Africanism in Africa). During the 1960s and 1970s regionalisms were created to spur economic development so as to overcome their disfavoured position in the global economy. After various setbacks, it was from the 1990s onwards that another type of regionalism emerged in both regions in the context of the end of the Cold War and the triumphal procession of neoliberalism.

#### *Latin America*

After the first declarations of political independence in the 1810s and 1820s, Latin America experienced five different periods of regionalism. The shape and the viability of regional projects have been influenced by four main factors: the cyclic changes in the political zeitgeist, the economic paradigm, the interests of external actors, and the composition of domestic elites. The importance of these factors has varied according to the respective periods. Economic ideas are the most pivotal premise, as all five regional schemes coincide with different economic paradigms.

After political independence, the liberation fighter Simon Bolívar coined the first notion of regionalism. Bolivarism referred to an agenda that aimed at a Hispano-American political confederation based on cultural affinities such as religion, language, jurisprudence, and ethnicity. However, this project was not able to prevent the post-colonial fragmentation process, as the colonial constructions broke into a number of national states and economies (Espinosa 1999). The dominant economic paradigm of classic liberalism and the heritage of colonial production structures were the two major reasons for this disintegration.

With the ascendance of the U.S., a continental Pan-Americanism replaced the Hispano-American Bolivarism from the 1880s onwards. The remapping of the regional space took place under the aegis of the U.S. demonstrating both its own imperial standpoints and a common destiny with its neighbours to the South (Murphy 2005). Pan-Americanism was first set up as a vehicle to drive back European influences in the hemisphere and to capitalise on trade and investment opportunities in Latin America. As the U.S. power expanded, it eventually grew into a new form of imperialism.

The creation of the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1948 did not bridge the gaps between the U.S. anti-communist agenda and South American preoccupation with structural economic problems (Calvert and Calvert 1990). As a consequence, the annoyance with the OAS in particular and the U.S. foreign policy in general opened the window again for new Latin American conceptions.

Cepalismo, a school of thought named after the UN-Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL in Spanish), founded it 1948 based itself on industrialisation and regional integration. The dependency on primary goods should be overcome through an inward looking development (Ffrench-Davis 1998). Although the notions of development and modernisation were referring to U.S. concepts, Latin America claimed the right to define its own strategy (Devés Valdés 2003). Domestic markets were considered too small but world markets would only aggravate global disparities.

Consequently, new projects of regional economic integration reshaped the spatial dimension of Latin America.

By the end of the 1970s, Cepalismo's attempts at regional industrialisation had failed. Latin American companies siphoned off rents without modernising their production or aiming at world markets (Connolly and Melo 1994). The rise of interests in the early 1980s eventually brought indebted countries to the verge of economic collapse and sealed the fate of most regional organisations. The 1980s are known as *década perdida* (lost decade) due to the on-going economic and debt crisis. The statist Cepalismo being discredited, a new economic paradigm emerged in form of the neoliberal Washington Consensus. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided the heavily indebted states of the region with creditworthiness while pushing for neoliberal reforms such as liberalisation of trade, privatisation of state companies and reduction of public spending. During that period, FDI increased significantly due to the effects of large-scale privatisations in public services and the mining sector. Regional ties weakened even if the smaller countries of the region still deemed integration projects as necessary in order to provide larger synchronised markets for global capital (Bulmer-Thomas 2006). On the political level, the region was carved out as a regime space. Despite occasional conflicts, the neighbouring dictators forged alliances against common internal opponents and global communism.

### ***Southern Africa***

As opposed to the discernible conjunctures of regionalisms in Latin America, the production of the regional space of Southern Africa has been more continuous. The major turning point was the comparatively late decolonisation process from the 1960s until the late 1980s.

European colonisation started in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and for about three centuries the dominant regional level was the Atlantic triangle based on slave trade, centred on selected coastal points in Africa. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the internal configurations of Southern Africa experienced important changes when various foreign and local migration waves set in due to shifts in political power and colonial expansion. The period until the 1920s was marked by wars and genocides as means to establish and defend territorial rule. The British colonial space was territorially encompassing to control all natural resources and conquered previously independent or void parts. The creation of colonial states did not interrupt the existing regional dynamics (Söderbaum 2004). In 1910 the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) was created in order to cement a regionalism of British protectorates centred on South Africa. It essentially consisted in an imperial economic construct that was designed to facilitate the inclusion the surrounding territories into an expansive South Africa (Gantz 2009). SACU established the application of South African tariffs to the other members as a decisive step towards a regional economic space.

From the 1930s onwards, the ideologies of Apartheid and Pan-Africanism ascended to become the dominant references for competing reconfigurations of the region. In South Africa, racial segregation covered all aspects of societal life (Posel 1991). The opposing regionalism was based on a political interpretation of Pan-Africanism (Geiss 1974). Between 1960 and 1966 a first wave of decolonisation spread throughout large parts of Southern Africa. The rest of the region succumbed to violent conflicts between liberation movements and colonial or neo-colonial rulers. Southern Africa was divided between the deeply entrenched racial regionalism and the post-colonial regional aspirations. Political and military actions gained a regional dimension throughout the 1960s and 1970s. On the institutional level, SACU treaty was revised in 1969 and further cemented the dominance of South Africa in commercial and financial issues.

In order to counter the South African expansion, the Frontline States (FLS) were established in the mid-1970s (Khadiagala 1994; Hentz 2005). This movement was scarcely formalised but provided a framework for high-level political cooperation between the anti-Apartheid governments of the region. In order to advance the reshaping of the region, the FLS aimed to attain economic autonomy from South Africa by means of a formal regionalism: the SADCC created in 1981.

SADCC benefitted from a supportive environment by the OAU that advocated the creation of regional economic communities. In addition, SADCC was also a means for its members to expand their status as aid receivers by providing a framework to Western donors. The existing economic, migratory and infrastructural region was centred on South Africa and SADCC was the politically driven regionalism to split and reshape this space.

Increased administrative interaction during the 1980s helped to establish a common understanding on key issues of economic policy and development (Nathan 2012). The projects had regionalised the fields of telecommunication, energy and infrastructure but national interests often dominated in the implementation of regional policies and prevented the production of an actual region. SADCC had started to disconnect its infrastructure from South Africa but was still heavily dependent on the Apartheid state in many areas (Oosthuizen 2006) and had built up a significant dependence on European funds (Anglin 1983).

## 2.2 Contemporary regionalisms

The creation of MERCOSUR and SADC was marked by two regionally transcending rationales: the rapprochement of the former rivals – Argentina and Brazil as well as the FLS and South Africa – and the ascendance of the neoliberal economic paradigm.

The position in the world system is crucial for the production of new spaces and it can be particularly pronounced for regionalisms in the South (Katzenstein 2005; Fawcett 2008). Accordingly, the restructuring of the bipolar world order opened up a window of opportunity for South-South relations. On the one side, central actors of the world order such as the U.S. and multilateral organisations faced limitations in their authority and credibility. On the other side, challenges in the many areas such as climate, energy and development were acknowledged as regional and global issues that required new forms of cooperation.

Policy-makers increasingly conformed to the global paradigms of neoliberalism, democracy and ultimately regionalism. The new paradigm for regionalism was to make an offensive step towards full integration into world markets (Hettne 1999). This meant more support for the private sector and policy adjustments to attract FDI.

MERCOSUR and SADC became the formal expression of new regionalisms by means of official declarations and legal contracts. The founding treaties defined an institutionalisation that would subsequently face several constraints in the context of different global and local changes at the end of the 1990s. In its founding treaty, the Treaty of Asunción, MERCOSUR directly referred to the changing world order and the formation of economic blocs (MERCOSUR 1991). Meanwhile, the creation a new organisation reflected the enthusiasm of political elites in the SADCC states to jointly take advantage of the opportunities that opened up. With the transitions in South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique, the SADCC lost its major political purpose. In turn, the pillar of commonly advancing donor relations became more important with the end of Cold War divisions in the region. The sectoral fragmentation had not delivered the expected rise of social and economic indicators and the weak institution

was feared to play in favour of a dominant South Africa, once the political transition allowed it to join (Oosthuizen 2006).

Towards the end of the 1990s, various challenges for SADC and MERCOSUR cropped up. SADC suffered from the proliferation of projects in the decentralised sectors and did not have an established structure to deal with security issues. MERCOSUR was under pressure due to the financial crisis and the political will to go beyond economic integration. In both cases, the answer was an institutional reform to strengthen the secretariats and create new organs. Regional cooperation between national governments moved from punctual and informal cooperation to more institutionalised and formal meetings.

Over the years, MERCOSUR gave way to an ever-growing expansion of tasks to coordinate. What started as an instrument for trade and investment soon became the arena of reference for numerous new issues. The modifications followed functional needs, national trends and institutional dynamics. The agenda of MERCOSUR thus changed the essence of regionalism but the institutions that were designed to fulfil the limited objectives of the original treaty lagged behind in terms of power and capacity. Multiple arenas for negotiations without decision-making power were created and attached to the three main organs. Ministerial reunions, working groups and technical commissions were each divided into dozens of commissions, forums, institutes and ad hoc groups. Hundreds of institutionalised branches covered a wide range of policy areas ranging from school libraries over biodiversity to cigarette trade.<sup>1</sup>

Vertical expansion had a different dynamic within SADC. The multitude of topics to be regionally coordinated reflected the interest of all member states to be in charge of one sector due to the prestige and funding associated with hosting a SCU. In the 1990s numerous protocols were negotiated and signed on various issues. Many of them followed a neoliberal approach and dealt with the creation of a regional market, chiefly through numerous SADC agencies dealing with trade, energy and infrastructure. Despite a memorandum that was issued to stop an excessive vertical expansion, SADC inflated to 20 sectors and over 500 projects by the late 1990s but only about 20% of the projects had a regional scope (Oosthuizen 2006, 82). The required financing went far beyond the actual regional and foreign contributions. Vertical expansion thus faced major constraints regarding its purpose to generate financial income. SADC reform in 2001 rationalised the proliferation of projects. It triggered a contraction in the vertical scope. The new agenda further prioritised a neoliberal imagination of the region but also opened up to other transnational topics such as food security, natural disasters or HIV/AIDS. However, national authorities were reluctant to give up an effective or at least potential source of income. The membership in SADC consequently related to the rent-seeking of governments (Standaert and Rayp 2012). The involvement of foreign development agencies played an important role in the expansion.<sup>2</sup> Not only did their financing offer an incentive to apply for more funding but also were they directly involved by promoting certain topics.

The vertical expansion shifted from a catchall approach to a concentration on two issues. The perception of what should be the core element of the development community changed. Complying with liberal economic ideas, state elites and development agencies put trade and commercial topics forward. The creation of a FTA

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1 See [http://www.mercosur.int/innovaportal/v/762/1/secretaria/acceso\\_autoridades\\_gestor](http://www.mercosur.int/innovaportal/v/762/1/secretaria/acceso_autoridades_gestor) (retrieved on 07.01.2015) for a complete overview.

2 External funding still represented over 50% of the SADC budget in 2009/10 (SADC 2009).

emerged as a major goal in 2000 with a new protocol on trade and was put in place in 2008. A subsequent linear expansion into a customs union, a common market and a common currency until 2018 was also declared a paramount regional goal.

In addition to economics, security issues such as conflict-ridden zones and regional political instability became a major issue for SADC. After the appeasement period of the early 1990s, security threats re-emerged as a regional issue in 1994 in the context of the genocide in Rwanda. The distribution of tasks was however not clearly defined. The security cooperation from the FLS was only gradually transferred (Khadiagala 2001). The first Lesotho crisis in 1994 was mediated outside of SADC. FLS leaders in combination with the military presence of South Africa pushed the King of Lesotho to reinstall the elected government. In 1998, the second Lesotho crisis, following an unconstitutional change of government, was in turn solved by the military intervention of Botswana and South Africa under a SADC mandate. In the late 1990s, the Congo conflict was regionalised on the grounds of the DRC's membership in SADC, which justified the involvement of various member states. SADC thus became a forum for state leaders to legitimise interventions in other political crises such as in Madagascar in 2009. Conversely, SADC also served as legitimisation for the absence of interventions, such as when it repeatedly re-affirmed "the indivisibility of SADC and solidarity with the government and people of Zimbabwe" (SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government 2003). For each crisis, SADC installed mediation mechanisms or even coordinated interventions (van Nieuwkerk 2010). It thereby provided legitimacy for these actions and shielded off the region against external involvement.

In sum, MERCOSUR's vertical expansion moved from narrow economic objectives to a broader political project while SADC included neoliberal and security policies in response to external and internal challenges but also followed the priorities of donors. Concerning horizontal expansion, both regionalisms emerged as incomplete territories and gave way to exclusion and inclusion on the basis of varying terms.

For SADC, the most important steps of expansion were the inclusion of South Africa in 1994 and of the DRC in 1998. The potential membership of South Africa had been a rationale for the creation of SADC and was therefore anticipated from the start. The inclusion of the DRC stretched SADC's territorial aspiration beyond the conventional geographic notion of Southern Africa. The step coincided with strategic and economic interests in energy and resources of some SADC members such as Zimbabwe and Angola.

For MERCOSUR, the founding treaty already represented a significant expansion. When Brazil and Argentina initiated MERCOSUR as a bilateral economic project in late 1990, Paraguay and Uruguay pushed for being included due to their economic and political reliance on their neighbours (O'Keefe 2009). Eventually all four countries signed the founding treaty in 1991. The territorial aspirations of MERCOSUR as a South American regionalism were underlined by associating the Andean countries and Chile in the course of the 1990s. The major change happened much later with the inclusion of Venezuela as the fifth full member in 2012 against considerable resistance from several domestic actors in MERCOSUR.

Within SADC, horizontal expansion was also seen as problematic for the integration process. The inclusion of the DRC spurred a controversy about overstretching the region, especially since it had not fulfilled the admission criteria. A moratorium was issued to stop the adherence of new members. Nevertheless, the aspiration towards comprehensive representation remained paramount and Madagascar was admitted in 2005. In turn, the negotiation groups for an Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU and the overlapping membership with other regional organisations in East and

Central Africa caused a fragmentation within SADC that countered the prospective of horizontal expansion.

The production of political space in both regions has relied on a number of unifying characteristics. Language, religion, colonial history and the forging of a common identity over a substantial period of time through literature, music and ideology constitute the foundations of perceived shared spaces. However, in both Southern Africa and South America wide disparities in physical geography, income, production structure, and political orientation as well as in the notion of national interests remain. These ambiguities suggest that regional spaces can be conceived but are bound to be frequently being altered or challenged by perceived spaces. Consequently, regionalisms reflect some divisions and overshadow others. Despite the frequent reshaping, some political spaces have proved to be more referential than others.

MERCOSUR had also being created as an expression of democratisation. Chile was by definition excluded due to its authoritarian regime (van Klaveren 2000). The same applied to Paraguay that was excluded from the MERCOSUR after the de facto coup d'état in 2012 on the grounds of violating democratic principles.

Democratic standards have also been an integral part of SADC discourses and principles but their enforcement was linked to internal power constellation rather than to external pressure. While SADC engaged in a military intervention in Lesotho to restore an elected government in 1998, it backed the Mugabe government in Zimbabwe despite persistent human rights violations (van der Vleuten and Ribeiro Hoffmann 2010).

The SADC treaty (article 3) and the Protocol of Ouro Preto (article 34) provided the two organisations with legal personality and thereby enabled them to turn into actors in their own right. However, the institutionalisation of a genuinely regional perception has been fragile. Both regionalisms have added new bodies over time and expanded existing organs. Some of them, such as the parliamentary commissions and the secretariats, were potentially supranational but were not vested with substantial decision-making powers. The political relevance of MERCOSUR and SADC has thus remained confined to a context marked by other actors. Instead of evolving on its own, MERCOSUR's scope was transformed from a predominantly economic scheme to a more political project. By contrast, SADC has oscillated between commercial and security priorities in accordance with sporadic agenda changes.

A social space that is often occurring informally has been the movement of people. SADC and MERCOSUR have adopted regulations to facilitate already legal border crossings. However, the existing, hitherto often illegal, migration represents a social practice that is vital for the lived space of the region but is neglected in most conceived spaces except for notions of control and repression x. Illegal migration is thus caught up in fixed structures set by national borders and the division of labour. The formation of a common regional social space that transcends existing patterns thus requires inter alia the free movement of people. However, member states of both regional organisations remained confined to established patterns and have been keen to retain the shallow containerisation of their territories (Nshimbi and Fioramonti 2014). In the case of SADC and MERCOSUR the concept of regional citizenship has produced an additional emblem on passports but not a regional space of rights.

While state actors have been crucial in the initial conceptions, regionalisms would be difficult to sustain if private actors were consistently excluded or excluded themselves. A recurring critique has been the lack of transparency and participation in the decision-making process (Caetano, Vázquez, and Ventura 2009). Nevertheless, the

ascendance of a state-led regionalism has been accompanied by an expansion of activities between neighbouring administrations and businesses, often on a so-called translocal micro-level (Hettne 2006).

In its first years, MERCOSUR had fulfilled several of its ambitious goals and was thus likely to stay. Civil society organisations started to analyse the process and formulated demands (Cason 2011). In SADC, social actors also recognised the relevance of regionalism but were largely absent from the formal process during the 1990s. The SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations was established as a representation of national umbrella organisations but lacked the means and the opportunities to play an influential role in the formal regionalism. The 2001 reform opened up more possibilities for consultation and participation, particularly in technical issues such as in HIV/AIDS policies (Godsäter 2014). However, the SADC secretariat was unable to fulfil its coordinating role due to the lack of an appropriate department. The SADC Parliamentary Forum also provided an arena for the involvement of citizens but the practical opportunities have been severely curbed by the marginal position in the institution and the influence of political leaders on the represented members (Oosthuizen 2006). A regional social space would also undermine the system of neopatrimonialism that remained a feature of many states in Southern Africa. Some civil society groups have been opposing regionalisms in its dominant form and formulated alternatives that circumvent the national states (Godsäter and Söderbaum 2011).

In South America, the regional political shift in 2003 had important implications for the way regional space was conceived. The Brazilian president Da Silva emphasised notions of MERCOSUR's "social legitimacy" and "regional citizenship" (Brazilian Ministry of External Relations 2008: 77). With progressive leaders taken over national governments, MERCOSUR's regional policies changed significantly and social norms ranging from human rights to education were adopted (Bizzozero 2011). In 2003 the programme Mercosur Social was created and the initiative 'Somos Mercosur' (We are Mercosur) followed in 2005. In 2006, the Social summit of Mercosur was installed to bring together hundreds of social organisations and it has been held regularly since.<sup>3</sup> Mercosur thus institutionalised opportunities for social actors to participate in the regional project (Serbin 2012). Nevertheless, their influence was largely based on consultation and less on decision-making. These new arenas for expression and negotiation were designed to strengthen the participation of citizens in the institutions but they have largely run in isolation to the official Mercosur process.

The formal institutions for civil participation provided by the national governments gained importance but continued to be only one possible arena for social actors. In many areas such as labour, human rights, gender and cooperatives regionalisation took place far beyond the official mechanisms and led to temporary alliances and stable networks on an informal basis (Alemany and Leandro 2006). The formal gatherings helped organisations to become acquainted with potential allies and thus provided a trigger for cooperation outside the official framework. However, ties within global or continental networks remained more central for funding, political support and access to information.

The 'Somos Mercosur' initiative was the first formal reference to the issue of identity-building. But the construction of common references and values has only scarcely been appropriated. In turn, a SADC identity has not been conceived so far and would run into contradictions with overarching inclusive Pan-African notions.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. <http://es.socialmercosul.org/cupula-social/> (retrieved on 02.02.2015).

It terms of regional reconfigurations, SADC and MERCOSUR imposed themselves through the creation of an, albeit partial, economic space. Infrastructure projects, incentives for investments and commercial facilitation all contributed to the formation of economic processes spreading out on a regional scale. The segmentation of the region on the grounds of labour, natural resources and markets was endorsed and extended. On the political level, democratic minimum standards were also enforced on a regional level, except in cases where they contradicted other more engrained regionalisms, such as the anti-imperialism ties of the FLS leaders in SADC. Both regionalisms produced an exclusive political space that regionalised conflicts and thereby shielded off foreign interventions. While regional resolutions were limited to trade disputes and elections in MERCOSUR, SADC also established itself as an arena for the settlement of violent conflicts.

There were numerous contestations of the dominant regionalism. While some actors would do without a regional organisation and defended national borders, many others proposed structural changes to the regional project, in particular concerning the interpresidential and interministerial concentration of power, the neoliberal agenda and the implementation of regional policies. The forging of a regional social space chiefly occurred through transnational networks of actors that were, as in the case of Mercociudades – a network of city administrations, at least initially excluded from the dominant regionalisms. Another channel for contestation was the establishment of new institutions such as parliamentary representations and tribunals. Despite being often marginalised and curtailed, they opened up an arena for the reflection on regionalist models. Even though these organs, just like many other parts of the regional organisations reproduced and reinforced national structures of power, they demonstrated the potential of transcending the rationale of nation states by challenging the dominance of the supreme actors.

Finally, by conceiving and producing a region, SADC and MERCOSUR also produced critical junctures. They did not only reshape the territorial divides of their regions but also defined new lines of inclusion and exclusion regarding political, economic and social spaces. In addition, critical junctures divided the region. Political ideologies and particularistic interests of national elites conflicted, productive processes exploited economic differences, and national peripheries turned into regional peripheries.

### **3. Interregionalism between South America and Africa**

#### **3.1 Patterns of interregionalism**

With the proliferation of regionalisms across the globe, interregional contacts between these projects have increased, too, chiefly from the European Union (Ponjaert 2013). These initiatives encompass a wide range of forms, both concerning their institutionalisation and the topics they cover. To categorise the multitude of interregionalism scholars identifies four types of interregional relations (see Rüländ 2014, Söderbaum et al. 2006, Hänggi 2006, Baert et al. 2014). The most formalised type is *pure interregionalism* between established regional organisations. This is probably the most widely analysed form concerning the EU but also the one that is less likely to find between Africa and Latin America, where regional organisations struggle to establish themselves as actors in their own right. Interactions between those two regions thus do not readily fit into this scheme. Other types of interregionalism seem more plausible. *Transregional relations*, for example, is a second category to capture relations between regions that lack internal cohesion. Membership in such region-to-region dialogues tends to be diffuse and is not moderated by pre-existing regional

organisations. Nation-states from both regions participate on their own, even though regional powers can act as spokespersons (Rüland 2014).<sup>4</sup>

*Hybrid interregionalism*, sometimes called 'quasi interregionalism', is a third category, describing contacts between regional organisations and less institutionalised regional groupings, often delineated by the counterpart (Hänggi 2006). Some authors identify a fourth type, *bilateralism*, describing interactions between a regional organisation and individual states (Baert et al. 2014). This can be subsumed within the category of hybrid regionalism. However, this particular type is of the special significance to this paper, because it underlines the role of regional powers.

In the following section the different layers of interregionalism across the South Atlantic will be examined: two examples of transregional relations (the Africa-South America summit and ZOPACAS), which seem to be the most prevalent form<sup>5</sup>, and example of pure interregionalism (between MERCOSUR and SACU/SADC). It is important to note that both cases have been preceded or facilitated by bilateral interregionalism between Brazil and Africa. Hybrid interregionalism is difficult to trace, as it seems to be mainly fit for the EU's external relations.

### 3.2 The Africa-South America Summit

The Africa-South America Summit represents the intercontinental scale of transregionalism, encompassing the countries of both regions as a whole.<sup>6</sup> It was initially conceived as an extension of Brazil's Africa Forum, a form of interregional bilateralism. Brazil and Nigeria took the lead for the first event that took place in 2006 in Abuja. While the African Union was the obvious umbrella on the African side, the delineation of South America reflected the sphere of influence of Brazil, encompassing its neighbours Surinam and Guyana, which are often marginalised in region-building, but excluding its competitor Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

Venezuela challenged Brazil's leadership by hosting the second meeting on Isla Margarita in 2009 and strongly promoting its own foreign policy ideology. Both countries had portrayed themselves as representing the interests of the Global South and thus the competition was less about the content of the interregional cooperation but mainly about the role of the protagonist (Gobierno de Venezuela 2010). However, the interest in this format seems to have dropped, as the following summits have been postponed several times and the number of participants decreased. The second summit was scheduled for 2008 and took place the year thereafter. The third one was planned for 2011 in Libya but was eventually held in 2013 in Equatorial Guinea. Conversely, regional organisations, in particular the AU, have played an increasingly prominent role in the events<sup>8</sup>, pointing to the potential or pure interregionalism behind hosted in a transregional shell. However, the main actors have so far been nation

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4 Aggarwal and Fogarty (2004) also point to transnational production networks and the transnational activities of non-governmental organisations and civil society actors in that context.

5 The Community of Portuguese Language Countries also falls in this category but due to Brazil being the only South American member and not representing its region within this organisation, it will not be covered in this paper.

6 A similar initiative has been launched in 2005 by Brazil to bring together South American and Arab States under the Spanish acronym ASPA (South America-Arab States Summit), cf Ayuso et al. (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. <http://asasummit.itamaraty.gov.br/asa-ingles/summit-of-south-american-africa> (retrieved on 18.04.2015).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. <http://www.au.int/en/asa> (retrieved on 18.04.2015).

states and in particular the heads of state. Considering the importance of national sovereignty in both regions, the legitimising and symbolic value of such mega-events plays a recurring role. In addition, there is also a functional-rational element, given that many countries of the region face the challenge of limited public budgets. Diplomats and cabinet members are able to take advantage of the ASA summit by meeting an extensive range of high-level counterparts, including representatives from seldom-visited countries. This can provide the ground for new alliances and cooperation. As within ZOPACAS, Brazil was effective in using this opportunity. In 2006 it rallied support for its Olympic bid. Another parallel with ZOPACAS is the dependence on leading and/or hosting countries to finance and organise such meetings in a context without permanent or centralised structures.

The limits of this high-level format are also very visible, given the rise of similar events competing for the limited time and finances from its heads of government. ASPA and the bilateral interregionalism with China clearly compete for these resources. Given the existence of other partly overlapping venues such as ZOPACAS and the CPLP, the ASA summit is prone to signs of redundancy, not least because of offers less functional or cultural grounds. The extensive partaking and the non-committing format of the ASA summit might translate into little more than rhetorical figures without a clear objective. In this sense, transregionalism exhibits even more of a temporal and punctual character than forms of interregionalism (Alden and Vieira 2005).

### **3.3 The Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic**

ZOPACAS emerged as a new form of interregional cooperation between adjacent countries of the South Atlantic in the mid-1980s. With the support of 15 states, Brazil successfully proposed a resolution for its creation to the UN general assembly in 1986 (UNGA 1986). Its main purpose was to establish the South Atlantic as a demilitarised space free of foreign military bases, internal aggression and nuclear weapons. The Apartheid regime was explicitly mentioned as aggressor and threat to the security of the region, and was therefore excluded as a member, and so was occupied Namibia. The secondary purpose was to promote development through cooperation between member states in economic, environmental and social matters.

For its chief promoter Brazil, the ZOPACAS provided an important geopolitical means. Within an organisation that was supposed to form a legitimised guarantor for a peaceful South Atlantic, Brazil tried to institutionalise the exclusion of the two superpowers (Gamba-Stonehouse 1989).

Argentina supported the initiative because it provided support in one of its major foreign policy issues – the British occupation of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas. Argentina was actively seeking international support in its territorial dispute and had encountered major problems in gathering favourable votes for its UN petition (Tulchin 1987). African states had been reluctant for three major reasons. Firstly, under the military anti-communist regimes, Argentina had been a strategic and ideological ally of South Africa and the U.S. Secondly, the economic and political ties of the Anglophone countries with their former metropolis were still dominant. And finally, Argentina's armed intervention was itself condemned as an act of aggression. The firm adhesion to the Western bloc was already being reconsidered in the aftermath of the war, and Africa's weight within the UN provided a considerable incentive to reassess its perception. Argentina started to reach out to the continent and engaged in a series of high level official visits to Africa. Relations with South Africa declined rapidly as Argentina underwent a democratic transition that was also expressed by an active role in the international isolation of South Africa. As a new foreign policy rationale,

Argentina defined itself as still being culturally part of the West but structurally located within the Global South (Jiménez 2010). These processes were all well appreciated by most African states. ZOPACAS thus provided an ideal institution to promote all of Argentina's foreign interests. It gave the country the opportunity to escape the bipolar system, to build up relations with new allies in the Third World, and to gather support in the cause of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.

For most African members, ZOPACAS was above all an important step towards overcoming Apartheid. The institutionalisation further cemented the isolation of South Africa bringing extra-regional members in line with the anti-Apartheid maxim. It thus complemented organisations such as the Frontline States. In addition the ZOPACAS provided additional legitimacy as it directly stemmed from the UN General Assembly.

To African countries, maintaining a zone free of armament would also stabilise the status quo. Coup d'états were common and one appeased border meant less pressure to build up an external defence on that side. After all, many states did not have one proper war naval, let alone a navy. Hegemonic ambitions in the South Atlantic were thus unattainable and ZOPACAS could prevent the expansion of any foreign power. This point of view contrasts starkly with Brazil's as it assumes that ZOPACAS would limit the ascendance of any hegemon, including its own members.

However, the widespread support for the organisation did not bring about a leader that could count on undisputed support among its neighbours (Lechini 2007). Therefore, conflicts between Brazil and its contestants were never openly carried out but constituted a balance of powers instead. In the 1990s, the priorities for the individual countries shifted. The end of the Cold War and Apartheid had stripped ZOPACAS off some of its main ambitions and many countries turned their back on the organisation or even on South-South relations in general.

Similar to many regionalisms of the time, priorities shifted and new objectives were included to revive the ZOPACAS. It should help institutionalising democratic transitions by providing instruments to support human right, multiparty systems and racial equality. In addition, ecological issues and organised crime emerged as important policy fields. With the end of Apartheid, South Africa joined ZOPACAS and the desire to align its foreign and defence policy gave the organisation some new impetus. At the same time, defence and security lost their importance and became an issue dealt with among the countries actually owning navies. Argentina and South Africa carried out a joint naval manoeuvre in 1993 and were subsequently joined by Brazil and Uruguay in biannually recurring military exercises under the name ATLASUR (Lechini 2006). This cooperation has been institutionalised within the national defence policies and for most navies it constitutes a prioritised pillar of alliance.

The overall heterogeneity among the members and their interests kept ZOPACAS from turning into an entrusted organisation. The biannual summits were usually closing with non-binding declarations and sometimes even postponed, often due to the lack of political will or interest in the respective host country. Some momentum surfaced in 2007, when Angola showed notable dedication in setting the agenda for the organisation. However, this did not seriously challenge the leadership of Brazil, which was revived afterwards by considerable financial commitment and political will during the Lula years.

ZOPACAS' biggest asset as an organisation is the opportunity to unite all of its members by offering a UN-framework against interventions of external powers. Another feature is the number of agreements that have been reached in several areas such as concerning the fight against illicit drug trade or mutual help in shipwreck.

ZOPACAS is chiefly built around elements of maritime security. This distinguishes it from other layers of interregionalism and explains its transregional scope. The organisation contains both a strategic and a functionalist element. Defence and disarmament provide an overarching rationale that is sidelined by technical agreements.

In sum, ZOPACAS as a transregional arena combines features of regionalism and interregionalism. It serves as an instrument to expand regional leadership both in established and in new spaces. It also enhances sovereignties vis-à-vis external forces on the one side and internal challenges on the other. However, due to its almost non-existing institutionalisation it is heavily dependent on key actors to set the agenda and to provide the means to implement it.

### **3.4 MERCOSUR - SADC/SACU**

Intriguingly the beginning of pure interregionalism between the Southern Cone of South America and Southern Africa were a consequence of Brazil's partial retreat from Africa in the 1990s. The own region and specifically MERCOSUR became the first priority and the strategy to engage with the whole continent was abandoned in favour of identifying strategic partners, chiefly post-Apartheid South Africa, the Portuguese speaking Angola and Mozambique, and oil-rich Nigeria. The rapprochement with SADC was thus mainly an expression of Brazil's interest to rationalise its main interests in the region by dealing with a regional body that encompassed three of those countries.

On the South American side, MERCOSUR had just been established and now bound the member states to act commonly in trade matters. From Brazil's perspective, negotiating a free trade agreement with SADC would be a first test whether MERCOSUR could effectively improve the position of its member countries in the global world order.

Starting in 1995 mutual high-level visits between Brazil and South Africa took place regularly and various bilateral accords were signed, eventually giving way to a Joint Commission Agreement in 2000. During that time Mandela also participated at a MERCOSUR summit in 1998 as the first President outside of the region.

Political commitment was thus clearly visible on both sides but engaging in direct negotiations with SADC turned out to be more complicated than anticipated. The obstacles became apparent once concrete steps needed to be taken. First of all, the institutional setting did not facilitate interregional agreements. None of the secretariats had the capacity to conduct external relations on their own, let alone an external representation. South Americans officials were as rare to find in Gaborone as Africans in Montevideo. Secondly, most SADC members simply lacked political interest in such an agreement. The organisation faced major internal challenges that prevented building up a common and comprehensive external agenda. Given that Apartheid had vanished, South-South coalitions lost importance for regional affairs. South America had again disappeared from the map and interregionalism was dominated by relations with its main donors in Europe. Thirdly, trade between most countries was modest and concentrated in a few volatile natural resources dependent on world market prices. Most commercial contacts and investments were weak and superficial except for a few multinational enterprises in mining and food. Lastly, with the exception of South Africa, the SADC members simply did not have resources for such an endeavour. The scarce personnel capable of negotiating such an agreement would have to be spared from the WTO rounds or SADC itself.

In contrast, relations with South Africa alone looked more promising and the country offered an entry point into the whole region. In the 1990s, the increase of South Africa's trade with Argentina and Brazil grew notably and underpinned the economic potential of an agreement. The private sectors of South Africa, Brazil and Argentina also manifested some interest and in particular the automotive industries formulated explicit demands (White 2003).

Consequently, MERCOSUR opted to start negotiating a free trade agreement with South Africa in 2000. Relations between SADC and MERCOSUR were maintained over time but still remained uncommitted. The attempt towards pure interregionalism was downsized into bilateral interregionalism.

South Africa's interest in MERCOSUR can mainly be attributed to the priorities of the post-Apartheid government. On the global level, it strived to overcome the decades of isolation, particularly in multinational forums. Former opponents had turned into potential allies. South Africa's Department of Trade and Industry developed the so-called "trade butterfly" strategy (Erwin 1999: 21). In addition to the traditional ties with Africa, Europe and the U.S., South Africa should spread out its wings to Latin America and Asia. MERCOSUR being the most innovative and successful grouping on its continent at the time, it cropped up as the natural partner. South Africa was also interested in the experiences of South America in dealing with issues of reconciliation after the military dictatorships.

Brazil and South Africa both shared the idea of exploring possibilities for South-South agreements with potential allies. But while MERCOSUR bound Brazil within the bloc, South Africa was able to start the negotiations on its own terms, as its regional framework was less constraining. SADC and SACU members were at that point free to sign individual FTAs. After South Africa unilaterally completed a FTA with the EU in 1999, the SACU members, who would bear its consequences without having been involved in the negotiations, called for a revision of the rules. The subsequent reform in 2002 did not reverse the hegemonic structure for that matter but it changed enough to become relevant for the South Atlantic realm.

SACU members were now required to sign new trade agreements as a single entity – much like MERCOSUR had to. The negotiations MERCOSUR had so far undertaken with South Africa were consequently being transformed into a SACU issue. An unintended side effect of the SACU reform was hence the agenda for the transformation of bilateral to pure interregionalism.

MERCOSUR found itself negotiating with four additional countries, making a potential agreement more difficult to reach and less attractive to sign. However, even though delegates from all five SACU countries were present at the negotiations, South Africa was the only spokesperson, marking in practice a return to bilateral interregionalism. This odd set-up created a number of misunderstandings as to who constituted the counterpart was of MERCOSUR. Once, it was clear that South Africa was handling all the matters on behalf of SACU, negotiations resumed.

However, the conditions for interregionalism changed significantly between 2001 and 2003. Even though MERCOSUR was hit by a profound economic crisis, which made external negotiations less appealing for both parties, two events notably improved the framework: Lula da Silva became President of Brazil and the WTO talks experienced a collapse that led to a languishing of multilateral trade. South-South relations became a new priority; both due to the political shift and due to the North-South divide in multilateral trade.

Consequently, Brazil carried on in the driver's seat of the SACU-MERCOSUR talks. It became a convenient instrument for Brazil to gain influence and prestige in the world while ensuring the cohesion of its own regional grouping. Brazil thus engaged in convincing the other MERCOSUR countries to pursue an agreement. Even though the SACU-MERCOSUR negotiations were as were still very technical, the mere fact that they took place was very political (Roberts 2004).

Within two years relations assumed a more formalised stage and a preferential trade agreement was agreed and signed by both parties in 2004. Due to the very limited range in terms of goods and rules, the PTA was not ratified and negotiations towards an improved trade agreement started. Eventually, after twelve lengthy rounds of negotiations concerned with technical details, a new PTA was signed in 2008 and 2009. The initial agreement had been further developed but crucial parts such as the automotive sector were again postponed. Overall substantial changes were lacking.

From an economic point of view, agreement contained little significance and a notable impact on trade could not be expected. In the light of the constraints affecting the budget and personnel of foreign affairs of the smaller states, this constituted a significant disappointment.

For South Africa and Brazil the immediate impact on trade was less relevant. Political elites in charge visibly gave priority to the South Atlantic negotiations even though substantial economic benefits were meagre. The PTA was not pushed in respond to demand from economic actors but as a political instrument for South-South cooperation at large (Nutenko 2006), as captured by the IBSA forum. It thus became a pioneer agreement between two regionalisms of the South. For both groupings it was one of the first agreement to be signed with another regional bloc, underlining the novelty of pure interregionalism. Another attempt at pure interregionalism was the proposal to establish formal relations between SADC and UNASUR. These ideas have yet to materialize but point out that the interregional potential of existing regionalisms is becoming a recognised feature.

## 4. Concluding remarks

The Atlantic is an important space for interregionalism both for South America and Africa, which has been particularly driven by several state-led initiatives over the past decade. However, it is far from being the main or even only avenue. The Pacific Alliance and the growing presence of India and China in Africa are reminders that not everything revolves around the South Atlantic. At the same time, the well-established relationship with Europe remains paramount for both regions, despite all South-South ideology.

In addition, the South Atlantic is not the monopoly of African and South American states. Some external actors have economic interests, such as Norway and its fisheries industry. The UK remains a very present actor due to its territories and patrolling military in the region. The EU and the U.S. aim to provide security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The self-positioning of the South American and the African regionalisms in the Atlantic order and beyond also requires a differentiation. The functions of producing regional order follow distinct logics. The regional hegemony of South Africa and Brazil plays out in distinct ways, the external dependence is much more pronounced in Africa, and the institutional set-up is very different, too. Learning and transfer of ideas is very limited on the interregional level. For SADC and to lesser degree for MERCOSUR, Europe

remains a main point of reference and so do previous attempts at regionalism within the region. There seems to be little room for coercion or teaching, as mutual knowledge and the extra-regional sphere of influence are still limited on both sides.

The emergence of South Atlantic interregionalism is due both to internal conditions such as foreign policy shifts in Brazil, as well as to external conditions such as the underrepresentation in global governance mechanisms. The main instruments of interregionalism appear to be formalistic, including various high-level summits and the signing of a PTA. Despite the fact that most interregional initiatives are developed by governmental agencies, the actors accordingly progress from transnational business (mining, agroindustry) and trade officers to foreign ministries and finally technicians. Civil society generally plays a marginal role in the dominant forms of interregionalism. Even though civil society has developed interregional ties, some more long-standing such as between trade unions and other more recent such as through the social forums, these ties have not produced a counter-project to the state-led forms of interregionalism.

The main categories of interregionalism (pure, transregional, hybrid and bilateral) can be meaningfully applied to the case of South America and Southern Africa. However, the analysis reveals a pattern where hybrid interregionalism does not readily figure. In addition, transregional and pure interregionalism are nested within bilateral interregionalism and thereby form a complex that follows similar logics and actors. ZOPACAS and the ASA summit underline Brazil's preponderance in interregionalism, which moves from the bilateral to the transregional stage or in the case of SACU-MERCOSUR to pure interregionalism.

Closely related to the establishment of regionalisms are the concepts of actorhood and regionhood, which highlight the emergence of regions as actors in their own right (Hettne 2003; Doidge 2011). By forming interregional linkages, the actorhood of a regionalism can indeed be strengthened. Interregionalism has provided visibility, external recognition and ultimately legitimacy to the formal organisations MERCOSUR and SADC, and above all to the regional leadership of Brazil and South Africa as being constitutive to regional order. However, in the cases examined in this paper interregionalism has not yielded more institutionalisation on the regional, a feature is considered to be crucial for regional actorhood (Doidge 2011). The relationship between interregionalism and regionalism is therefore only mutually reinforcing to a certain point. The most innovative feature of interregionalism might be that it serves a starting point for imagining a new regionalism, which is different from the interregional formation of mega-regions (Baert et al. 2014). ZOPACAS is the most striking example, as it proposes the South Atlantic as its own region and not as an interstitial space between regions. Under which conditions interregionalisms transform into regionalisms should therefore be considered a crucial research question, especially for scholars dealing with the potential of an emergent Atlantic space.

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