Regional integration in Southern Africa –
A test case for the relative explanatory power of old and new theories of regional integration?

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Abstract
The paper at hand presents an analytical framework to assess the relative power of both ‘mainstream’ theories of regional integration and theories of the New Regionalism for the explanation of regional integration in Southern Africa. It is argued that the explanatory power of theories of both theoretical camps can be tested by comparing their assumptions with regard to four criteria of analysis with the reality of regionalism in Southern Africa. This attempt is based on the argument that the development of strictly distinct research agendas for the examination of the European Union and for the analysis of regional integration processes in other parts of the world is counterproductive.
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Introduction

Processes of regional integration on the African continent provide a good example to illustrate the dividing line in current theorizing of regionalism. On the grounds of the assumed fundamental differences between the African processes of regionalism and those in Europe, the call for a specific theory of the New Regionalism, including African regionalism, becomes louder. But is this claim justified? Are these differences a sufficient justification for the development of a separate theoretical approach? In order to answer this question, it must be further analysed to what extent European based theories can be consulted for the explanation of African regional integration. Further, the possibilities of mutual learning of the different theoretical ‘camps’ must be examined. The paper at hand presents a framework of analysis in order to explore the scope of a possible co-operation of mainstream integration theories and theories of New Regionalism in the explanation of African regional integration.

But what is the rationale behind this research focus? Why is it worth analyzing the relative explanatory power of both mainstream theories and theories of New Regionalism, here for the African context?

Independent from the case of African regionalism, it can be argued that the ‘joint co-operation’ of the theories should be favored over a separation in theories of Old Regionalism. From a theoretical standpoint, the development of distinct integration theories for the examination of regionalism in different parts of the world is only a second-best solution. Because in this case the enhancement of theoretical debate in the field is restricted as a critical discussion between the existing theoretical ‘camps’ only occurs to a very limited degree.

The strict separation between scholars working on regional integration in Europe and those analysing integration processes in other parts of the world is artificial and counterproductive for the development of both ‘theoretical camps’. Given especially, as Warleigh (2004) points out, that the advantages of closer co-operation are mutual: By considering processes of regionalism in other parts of the world, scholars working on regional integration in Europe are provided with a wider range of examples to test their theoretical models. The prominent n=1 problem could be solved. And only with the help of a comparative analysis of different processes of regional integration, the specific features of the EU can be differentiated from those that all projects of regional integration have in common. Furthermore, EU studies can be enriched by the insight of studies on the New Regionalism, for instance, by integrating the

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1 The concepts ‘regionalism’ and ‘regional integration’ are rendered interchangeable in this paper as both refer to conscious actions of enhanced regional co-operation predominantly driven by state-actors mostly in order to implement a formal regional project.

2 In the context of this paper the term ‘mainstream theories’ refers to integration theories that were predominantly developed for the explanation of European integration. Here especially Neo-Functionalism and (Liberal) Intergovernmentalism.

3 Theories of old regionalism deal predominantly with the case of European integration while those of new regionalism are engaged with more current processes of regional integration in other parts of the world.
relationship between the global, the macro-regional, and the micro-regional level\footnote{Macro- and Micro-regions are defined by Söderbaum and Taylor as follows: "...Micro-regions exist between the "national" and the "local" level, and are either sub-national or cross-border. They are distinguishable from macro-regions ("international regions"), which are larger territorial units or subsystems, between the "state" and the "global" level." (Söderbaum/Taylor 2004:1, Footnote 1).} in the analysis (Warleigh 2004: 302-309).

But also scholars of the New Regionalism can benefit from a stronger relation to mainstream theories: EU studies with their comparatively long-standing history can serve as an example as the theoretical approaches of the New Regionalism can learn a lesson both from the failures and the strengths of the EU and accordingly of EU-studies. And only against the background of the EU as an example of the old Regionalism, the novelty of the New Regionalism can be defined (Warleigh 2004: 305-307).

Instead of an a priori rejection of mainstream theories for the explanation of New Regionalism (here in the African case), a detailed analysis of weaknesses and strengths of both mainstream theories and theories of the New Regionalism for the explanation of regionalism in Africa is advisable and bears even more merits: The results of this examination can lead to interesting insights with regard to the discussion of the usefulness or impossibility of a universal theory of regional integration. For instance, in case the examination reveals that mainstream theories bear in no way relevance for the explanation of African regionalism, the argument of the insuperable differences between processes of the Old and the New Regionalism would be further backed, the possibility of a general integration theory would further recede into the distance.

Independent of the rejection or acceptance of the possibility of a general integration theory, the proposed analysis can also deliver insight concerning the question of how far the specialisation of integration theories should go. Is it for instance appropriate to suggest a distinct theory of regionalism for developing countries? Or do the great differences between certain regions of developing countries, e.g. Africa and Latin America, rule out the possibility of a common theoretical framework?

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: In a first step the empirical setting of the analysis is presented. In this context reasons are given for the choice of Africa as object of investigation. As a second step the three theoretical approaches under consideration, Neo-Functionalism, (Liberal) Intergovernmentalism and New Regionalism Approach are introduced and their selection is justified. In order to test these approaches on their significance for the African context, four criteria of analysis are derived. In a further step the propositions of the three approaches as regards the criteria of analysis are outlined. Based on these findings research questions are generated that can lead the empirical analysis. Finally, some concluding comments will highlight further need of discussion.
The empirical setting

The selection of regionalism in Africa as object of investigation seems, at first glance, unusual since regional integration processes in Africa do not belong to the most prominent ones.

Being so different from those in Europe, the internal and external features of regionalism in Africa can be described as an extreme ‘test case’ and as a challenge for the explanatory power of mainstream integration theories. Therefore, the example of African regionalism is very well qualified to test the often asserted claim of general, worldwide relevance of mainstream integration theories, especially Neo-Functionalism. But what precisely is different about regionalism in Africa, compared to regionalism in Europe?

One important distinction is the fact that African integration processes form a part of the second wave of regionalism – starting from the mid-1980s – whereas European integration already began during the first wave. Hence – so the argument – integration efforts in Africa are imbedded in a specific international setting not comparable with the situation prevailing in Europe in the 1950s (Hettne 2003: 23-24).

Characteristic for the New Regionalism is, furthermore, its multidimensionality as it is not restricted to economic issues and comprises distinct levels of regionalism, including the macro-, meso-, and micro-level (Breslin/Hook 2002: 3).

Additionally, regionalism among the developing countries of Africa is said to be characterized by a relatively weak power position of the nation-state, leading to a comparative low influence of formal, state-driven integration initiatives and an important role of non-state actors and informal activities in the process of regionalism (Boås 2001: 34-38; Söderbaum 2004: 32).

At the same time, regionalism is seen as a great chance for African countries to overcome or at least alleviate their marginalization in the world economy. For instance, from an economic perspective, regionalism bears the chance of building a large African market and thus reducing the disadvantage of the relatively small size of the several national markets (Asante 1997: 30). The processes of regionalism can even take the form of “Development Regionalism” (Hettne 2001: 104), which implies the willingness of all actors involved to join their forces in order to increase wealth and development on the continent. In this form, regionalism can serve development among others by increasing the bargaining power of African states in international negotiations and by securing social stability through measures of redistribution (Hettne 2001: 104-105).

The choice of African regionalism as object of investigation can therefore be justified on the grounds of its theoretical as well as its practical relevance.

In the paper at hand, African regional integration as object of investigation is further specified with regard to a thematic and a spatial focus in order to provide differentiated answers to the questions above.
Thematically, special attention is given to regional integration taking place in the fields of trade and security. The underlying assumption justifying this selection is the fact that the policy areas of trade and security show a different degree of affinity towards regional integration.

While trade policy as an economic subject matter is conceptualised as a relatively uncontroversial policy area depending by its nature on international co-operation, security policy shows different features: Traditionally security issues belong to the sensitive core responsibilities of the nation-state. They are the very essence of state sovereignty and are therefore difficult to include into efforts towards regional integration.

By concentrating on trade and security policy, the analysis can be enriched through the question if the different theoretical approaches tested in the African context bear the same relevance for the explanation of integration processes in the field of trade and security.

Spatially, the analysis focuses on regional integration in Southern Africa. Here two levels of regional integration in the southern part of the continent are analysed: At the macro-level, one of the most prominent examples of regional integration in Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is examined. Furthermore, smaller scale integration projects at sub-national level such as the Cross-Border Initiative (CBI)/Regional Integration Facilitation Forum (RIFF) and Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) are under appraisal.

In this context it is hypothesised that integration efforts taking place at different levels vary amongst others in their constellation of actors and the power relations among these actors. How the theories under consideration are able to address these specific features of regional integration at different levels will also be analysed.

The examination of Southern African regional integration in the stated policy areas and on the two different levels can therefore – additionally to the benefits mentioned above - contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the integration processes taking place on the African continent. By the same token, the often-neglected links between formal and informal integration as well as the relationships between different levels of integration (Warleigh 2004: 303+308) are subject to investigation in the proposed analysis.

The theoretical framework

Another aspect requiring further clarification is the selection of the theoretical approaches that will be tested in the Southern African context. Representative for mainstream integration-theories, Neo-Functionalism and (Liberal) Intergovernmentalism were chosen.

As the oldest theory of regional integration, Neo-Functionalism has been subject to major revisions during its long evolution. Regardless of fierce critique and the proclamation of its ‘obsolescence’ by its founder, Ernst B. Haas, Neo-Functionalism has managed to ‘survive’ and its relevance for the explanation of current integration...
processes is still being discussed\(^5\). On these grounds, Rosamond argues for a re-reading of Neo-Functionalism in order to explore the possible insights that neo-functional reasoning can offer for the analysis of the EU and of comparative regionalism today (Rosamond 2005: 250-251).

Beside the challenges posed by the specific political, economic and social conditions prevailing in Africa, Neo-Functionalism as a relatively ‘old’ theory must prove that its advancements provide the basis for a meaningful application of the theory in the setting of the second wave of regionalism.

The selection of Intergovernmentalism as a second theory, mainly presented by the work of Stanley Hoffmann, is linked to the precedent choice of Neo-Functionalism. Not only can both theories be described as very prominent, but also their evolution was and still is characterised by a high level of mutual interdependence. For instance, the arguments of Neo-Functionalism were refuted and challenged by Intergovernmentalism – and vice versa – provoking an ongoing debate between the two theories\(^6\). On the basis of Intergovernmentalist reasoning, Liberal Intergovernmentalism as developed by Andrew Moravcsik is also included into the analysis since it extends the analytical focus by the provision for the domestic level in the process of regionalism.

The third theoretical approach considered in this paper is the New Regionalism Approach (NRA), developed by scholars around Björn Hettne and Fredrick Söderbaum. The NRA can be labelled as counterpart to the mainstream theories of integration as it takes into account the specific features of the processes of New Regionalism, especially in the countries of the ‘south’. This specific focus also bears problems as the NRA runs the risk of developing into a theory for the exclusive explanation of regionalism in the South. Since proponents of the NRA themselves critically highlight this potential development (see Söderbaum 2004: 35), it can be assumed that the NRA can benefit from a critical discussion with other theories of integration.

**Criteria of analysis**

For the proposed analysis the process of theory testing is applied. However, the object of this analysis is not the declaration of one theoretical approach as the one with the highest and accordingly one with the lowest explanatory value for Southern Africa. Instead, the advantages and disadvantages of the theoretical approaches for the explanation of African regionalism will be outlined as a final result of the research.

The test of the selected theories is carried out with the help of a set of criterions generated from the following theoretical thoughts:

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\(^5\) See for instance the special issue of the journal ‘European Public Policy’ in 2005 (Vol. 12, No. 2), which is exclusively dedicated to the work of Ernst B. Haas.

\(^6\) However, the real contribution and significance of the “great debate” between Neo-Functionalism and Intergovernmentalism is also subject to critical discussion (Rosamond 2005: 243).
According to Giering, (1997: 12-16) theories of integration should approach the issue of regionalism by fulfilling three functions. In a first step, theories of integration should attempt to reduce the complexity of regionalism by extracting and systematically defining actors as well as factors that are highly relevant for the integration process (function of selection). Furthermore, hypotheses have to be derived about the correlation of selected factors and their specific influence on the process of integration. The testing of these hypotheses can further contribute to a better understanding of the integration process (function of explanation). Based on the insights gained, projections about the further development of the integration process can be formulated (function of projection). Out of these declared functions, the following four criteria of analysis can be derived: The function of selection leads to the question about who the main actors in the integration process are. The function of explanation raises the questions about the necessary conditions for a successful integration and the detailed course of the integration process. Finally, the function of projection poses questions about the general motives and final goals pursued through the integration process (see Faber 2005).

These four criteria, however, in a modified and extended form presented below, provide the basis for the analysis of the selected theoretical approaches. The rationale for this proceeding is the assumption that the chosen criteria of analysis – namely the conditions of successful integration, the course of integration, the main actors of integration, and the motives as well as goals determining integration – deal with major determinants of the integration process. Therefore, if a theoretical approach is able to provide significant insight with regard to these criteria, it is at the same time able to provide a meaningful picture of the integration process.

What are the precise advantages of these criteria of analysis? First of all, the criteria provide the opportunity to structure the selected theoretical approaches to identify their possible focal points as well as to provide the opportunity for comparison and confrontation of the different theoretical arguments. Secondly, and most importantly, they provide a workable framework that allows the examination of the meaningfulness of the selected theoretical approaches in the context of African regionalism. It can be analysed if the assumptions concerning actors, background conditions, course of integration etc. proposed by the selected theories really reflect the African reality.

The analysis is enriched by introductory information about the origins of the theoretical approaches and their theoretical heritage, respectively. Furthermore, a short description of the theoretical self-definition of the three approaches is given. Here it is important to differentiate whether the approaches at hand claim to be coherent theories of regional integration or not and if they have already achieved the status of mature theories. The idea behind this presentation is the assumption that the body of work of these theoretical approaches can only be understood if their theoretical origin, their evolution, and their theoretical claim are taken into account.
In a concluding category it is further scrutinised whether the theoretical approaches give any references concerning their validity in other regional contexts. This aspect is especially interesting for the mainstream theories, which were primarily developed for the explanation of European regionalism.

But the described procedure is not without problems. Firstly, the analysis of the theoretical approaches by means of the selected criteria bears the danger that the general context of the theoretical approaches is neglected (Faber 2005: 273) and instead a reductionist picture of the theoretical approaches presented (see Rosamond 2005: 247). It must be kept in mind that theories in general are not solely made up of differentiated arguments. Characteristic for a theory are instead the stated hypotheses about the relationship and interconnectedness between these factors. In order to avert the danger of fragmentation and misleading interpretation, the broader theoretical context in which the selected arguments are incorporated must be held up.

A second problem is connected with the variety and multiplicity of theoretical thoughts subsumed under the label of one theoretical approach. As the process of theoretical development within one ‘school of thought’ leads to increased complexity and differentiation of the body of thought, it becomes more challenging to select characteristic features and assumptions of the theoretical approach. Relating to the analysis at hand, it means that it is impossible to present one single theoretical attitude, for instance, with regard to the main actors of regionalism or the course of regional integration. Instead, the theoretical positions vary over time and depend also on the specific author under consideration. Allowing for this difficulty, the following presentation of the three selected theoretical approaches and their assumptions with regard to the criteria of analysis doesn’t claim completeness. The aim is not to give an exhaustive image of the theoretical approaches but rather to explore more or less characteristic ideas and basic assumptions characterizing the three approaches with regard to the criteria of analysis. Major revisions in the theoretical programme are considered as long as they bear relevance for the aim of the analysis.

**Neo-Functionalism**

The development of Neo-Functionalism is strongly associated with the work of *Ernst B. Haas*, whose book ‘The uniting of Europe’, first published in 1958, laid the foundations for neo-functional reasoning. Developed as an attempt to advance the Functionalism of *David Mitrany*, the theory did not only build on functional reasoning but additionally considered the role of different actors in the process of integration. Further influenced by the simultaneous development of pluralist reasoning in political science, Neo-Functionalism attached importance to the pluralist organisation of state and society and earned the label of a ‘pluralist theory’ (Rosamond 2000: 55).

A first heyday of neo-functional theorizing in the 1950s and 1960s was followed by a time of revision in the early 1970s. Here, authors like *Philippe C. Schmitter*, *Joseph S. Nye*, *Leon N. Lindberg* and *Stuart A. Scheingold* entered into a critical discussion...
about merits and shortcomings of the theoretical concepts and thus contributed to a systematic development of neo-functional theorising. A crisis within the circles of Neo-Functionalism arose in the middle of the 1970s as the explanatory power of neo-functional integration theory for the understanding of current processes on the international level was questioned. Neo-Functionalism experienced ‘a loss in vogue’ and only reappeared in the late 1980s. Characteristic for the resumption of neo-functional reasoning was the fact that only single elements of the theory were selected and incorporated in new theoretical approaches for the explanation of European integration, especially the development of supranational governance (Faber 2005: 135). As a result, the neo-functional model experienced a loss in coherence and the strict classification of scholars as ‘Neo-Functionalists’ was no longer possible (Faber 2005: 175). Furthermore, influenced by approaches of the New Institutionalism, neo-functional reasoning experienced an ‘institutionalist turn’. One attempt to systematically resume neo-functional reasoning was undertaken by Stone Sweet and Sandholtz at the end of the 1990s.

**Theoretical self-definition**

The theoretical self-conception of Neo-Functionalists is an important issue to explain the crisis of the theoretical approach at the end of the 1970s and the judgement of its founder, Ernst B. Haas, that regional integration theory was lacking theoretical and empirical relevance (Haas 1975).

In general, research on regional integration was according to Haas impeded by the restricted comparability and match between the existing theoretical approaches in the early 1970s. This situation was caused by the missing consensus among the theoretical approaches about what constitutes the end state of regional integration (the dependent variable-problem), their different levels of analysis as well as distinct ways of operationalising the process of integration (Haas 1971: 18+26). Haas assessed Neo-Functionalism not as a mature theory but along with Federalism and Transactionalism as a pretheory of regional integration (Haas 1971: 18-26).

But what reasons led Haas to temporarily declare the demise of the theory in the middle of the 1970s? According to his own theoretical standards, the neo-functionalist model failed because it was not able to describe, explain and forecast the course of the regional integration process in Europe. The ‘empty chair crises’ of 1965 provides one example for an unexpected turn in the European integration process that hadn’t been anticipated by Neo-Functionalists and that couldn’t be explained by neo-functional reasoning. This experience made clear that amongst others the role of nationalistic sentiments for the integration process had so far been underestimated in the neo-functional model (Breslin/Higgott/Rosamond 2002: 6).

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Neo-Functionalism failed to meet basic requirements of a theory, as it didn’t provide causal and testable hypotheses about the progress of regional integration that could be verified with the help of a limited number of variables. Furthermore, according to the rigorous assessment of its founder, Neo-Functionalism failed to provide a sufficient degree of abstract theorizing, was characterized by a limited scope, and its assumptions could not be tested intersubjectively (Faber 2005: 84-85).

But Haas went even further by questioning the value of regional integration theory in general: In an external environment of increasing interdependences, the building of regional institutions would no longer be the first-choice option for nation-states to cope with problems of international cooperation and decision-making. The prevailing conditions that had lead to regional integration in the past were no longer relevant. Therefore Haas declared the “obsolescence” of regional integration theory (Haas 1976: 173). Instead, theorizing about the emerging international interdependencies should replace the discussion on issues of regional integration (Faber 2005: 79-80).

It is striking that Neo-Functionalists – first of all Ernst B. Haas – had high theoretical standards and followed theoretical precepts that exceeded a mere empirical investigation and description of European integration (Rosamond 2005: 240). Furthermore, they assessed and redefined their theoretical argumentation very self-critically according to their own high standards. This leads Anne Faber (2005: 86) to the qualified question whether it was the neo-functional theory that failed or a specific understanding of theory in social sciences.

**Conditions for successful integration**

The discussion on favorable conditions for regional integration was initiated by Haas. He investigated whether the lessons learnt in Europe were significant for other areas as well (Haas 1961). He identified institutional, functional and environmental determinants as responsible for the enhancement of the European integration process. A comparison of these determinants with the conditions prevailing in the Soviet Bloc, the Arab states, and the Americas revealed great differences, which led Haas to conclude that the chances of these areas to reproduce the European development are very poor. Accordingly, his conclusion was that a “universal law of integration” could not be derived from the experiences made in Europe (Haas 1961: 389). But at the same time he pointed out that the European path to integration wasn’t the only possible way and that the chance of an evolvement of regional integration out of completely different conditions could rather not be excluded. This last thought was further elaborated by Haas in 1996 and led to the concept of ‘functional equivalents’ (see paragraph *Validity in other regional contexts* further below).

Neofunctionalists paid ongoing attention to the ‘environmental patterns’ of integration in Europe, also called ‘background conditions’. Three conditions were identified as

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8 The ‘environmental determinants’ were later called ‘background factors’.
crucial for European integration (Haas 1961: 374; Haas 1966: 104-105): Firstly, the pluralist social structures prevailing in the Western European countries. Secondly, the relatively high level of economic and industrial development in Europe was declared as conducive to regional integration just as, thirdly, the homogenous ideological orientations among the national elites of the integrating countries.

Further theorizing in this regard was conducted by Schmitter and Haas (1966)⁹, who classified nine conditions influencing the likeliness of the transfer of spill-over processes from the economic into the political sphere. As background conditions, they identified the size and power of the integrating units, the level of transactions between these units, the prevailing pluralism within and among the units, and the mutual complementarity of the national elites. In a second group, containing conditions that make an impact at the time of the initiation of the economic union, they identified the possible aims pursued by the involved national governments and the powers of the newly institutionalised union. Thirdly, as process conditions they stressed the decision-making style within the new institutions, the re-examined transaction among the unity, and, lastly, the adaptability of main actors in the governmental and private sphere (Haas/Schmitter 1966: 266-274).

Critique on Haas’ and Schmitter’s concept was issued by Nye (1970). He built on the neo-functional model but revised it insofar as that he replaced the so called ‘background conditions’ by altogether seven factors determining the ‘integrative potential’ of a region. Nye refused the classification of these factors into different temporal phases, as done by his colleagues Haas and Schmitter. Instead, he emphasised the ongoing impact of these factors on the progress of regional integration. He further divided the conditions determining the integrative potential of a region into structural and perceptional conditions. While structural conditions are relatively stable and remain in general unaffected by the process of integration, perceptional conditions are stronger influenced by the integration process itself and prove to be more volatile (Nye 1970: 812)¹⁰.

Furthermore, based upon neo-functional reasoning, Nye presented seven ‘process mechanism’ which can – depending on their occurrence – enhance or hinder further integration processes (Nye 1970: 804-812)¹¹.

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⁹ An identical version of the article titled “Economics and Different Patterns of Political Integration: Projects about Unity in Latin America” was already published 1964 in the Journal ‘International Organization’, Vol. 18, No.4.

¹⁰ The integrative potential of a region is determined by the following structural conditions: 1) Symmetry of unity, 2) Capacity of member states to adapt and response, 3) Pluralism, 4) Elite value complementarity and these perceptional conditions: 5) Perceived equity of distribution of benefits, 6) Perceived external cogency and 7) Low (or exportable) visible costs (Nye 1970: 821).

¹¹ These process mechanisms include: 1) Functional linkage of tasks, 2) Rising transaction, 3) Deliberate linkage and coalition formation, 4) Elite socialization, 5) Regional group formation 6) Ideological-identititive appeal and 7) Involvement of external actors.
Course of Integration

In neo-functional reasoning the main concept explaining the course of integration is the mechanism of spill-over. According to this concept, the integration of two former independent sectors will also affect neighbouring sectors by enhancing problems of policy coordination in these related fields. The evolving problems of coordination can best be solved through the establishment of common rules within the scope of further integration processes. Most likely, the point of departure of the integration process is located in the economic sector. From the relatively uncontroversial areas of economics, integration will spread over to other related sectors, finally reaching more controversial political areas.

Strictly speaking, Haas used the concept of spill-over in a political and a geographical sense. In his political reasoning, he used spill-over as an analytical concept to describe the dynamic of the integration process. But he also used it synonymously with the term ‘incrementalism’ to describe the political strategy of a step-by-step integration process pursued by the European political actors, namely Monnet and Schuman. In the geographical sense, Haas used the spill-over term to describe the inclusion of new geographical areas in the integration process, in other words: the enlargement of the integration project in spatial terms (Faber 2005: 47-48).

The concept of spill-over, also termed expansive logic of sector integration, was further differentiated in three dimensions: functional spill-over, political spill-over and cultivated spill-over – whereas in the course of the theoretical debate different authors attached slightly different meanings to these dimensions.

While the meaning of the term functional spill-over as the basic concept describing the spread of integration processes starting in technical/economic policy areas to related policy fields is not contested, variations occur with regard to the sense of political spill-over. Haas, originally, described with this term the situation of integration efforts passing over from the sphere of economic issues to the more contested fields of political issues (Faber 2005: 125, footnote 178). The meaning of the term changed in the course of the theoretical discussion. George (1985: 21-28) and Tranholm-Mikkelsen (1991: 5-6) conceptualized political spill-over as a learning process of national elites, who realize that their interests are better served on the supranational rather than the national level. As a consequence, they withdraw their activities and expectations from the national level and instead focus on the new supranational level. Therefore, further pressure for an increase of the integration process is generated (Tranholm-Mikkelsen 1991: 5-6). If community institutions and organs react to these pressures, cultivated spill-over will occur. Here, community institutions may serve as mediators in international negotiations and may enable the achievement of a consensus moving beyond the ‘minimum common denominator’. In this last dimension of the spill-over concept, the voluntaristic component accompanying the integration process is stressed (ibid.: 6-7).  

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12 The differentiation of three dimension of spill-over was not explicitly laid down in the original...
Haas originally developed the perception of an automatic integration process advancing from economic to political spheres, as the motivation of participating actors would slowly shift from mere technical to more political issues. One of the main results after a first period of revision of the neo-functionalist approach in the first half of the 70s was the rejection of the notion of a continuous devolution of regional integration.

The idea of an automatic integration progress was first questioned by Schmitter in his ‘Revised theory of regional integration’ (1970). He rejected the notion of a predetermined endpoint of regional integration and identified seven possible strategies actors can adopt in order to overcome a need for action in a once-started integration process. In consideration of these actor strategies, of factors influencing the integration process, and of styles of decision-making, Schmitter proposed the hypothesis that not spill-over but the strategy of encapsulation, equitable with stagnation, was most probably followed by the relevant actors. Another important revision of the Neo-Functionalist concept introduced by Schmitter was the consideration of a possible regression of the integration process through the strategy of spill-back (Schmitter 1970: 844-846).

As a result of Schmitter’s and other author’s theoretical revisions, the progression of integration was no longer seen as automatic. Instead, the voluntaristic element of integration was stressed as well as the variety of possible outcomes of a once-started integration process. Further, the course of integration was seen more differentiated: as being divided into different steps and cycles of integration (Faber 2005: 82).

But for some scholars the explanation of the course of integration was still insufficient. Thus several revisions on the spill-over concept were carried out in order to determine when and how spill-over dynamics occur. Among those scholars, Dorette Corbey (1995) found a way to explain the stop-and-go phases of the integration process. Claus Busch (1996) presented an approach to explain differences in the processes of integration by taking the specific internal logic of the integrating policy areas into account.

**Main actors of integration**

In the ideal type of political integration presented in Haas’ early work, three distinct groups of actors can be identified:

Beside the national governments as a first group of actors, national elites, representing the national bureaucracy, national economic forces, interest groups and...
political parties constitute a second group of actors in the process of regional integration (Welz/Engel 1993: 142). Haas conceptualized elites as the leadership of all relevant groups that have an impact on public decision-making (Haas 1958: 17). He justified his focus on the role of these elites in the integration process with two assumptions: Firstly, the European organisations possess a bureaucratic structure; the power of decision-making is therefore in the hands of the leadership (in other words: the elites) of these organisations. Here, they can exert far-reaching influence on the integration process by favoring pro-integrative decisions. Secondly, the elites involved in regional integration stand out for their consolidated knowledge about the subject of integration and their positive attitude towards the integration process. Accordingly, they have a vital interest in the deepening of regional integration, which makes them to an important ‘player’ in the process of integration (Haas 1958: 17-18).

As a third group of actors, supranational institutions, and here especially the technocratic decision-makers of these institutions, play a significant role for the enhancement of integration. Haas assumed that once established, supranational institutions push to fulfil their mandate and so finally become a focal point for national elites, who direct their actions towards the new supranational centre of competence and power. Eventually, a loyalty transfer from the national to the regional level can occur if national elites shift their expectations towards the new level (ibd.: 18-19).

In the course of theoretical development, Ernst B. Haas also recognised the role of individual statesmen for the integration process. When pursuing nationalistic aims, these actors can become a hindrance for further integration, but striving for the goal of economic incrementalistic integration together with non-governmental elites, they can also provide positive impulses for further integration efforts (Haas 1967: 329-331).

Along with the new impulses in neo-functionalist reasoning occurring at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the discussion on the role of supranational institutions and national elites further differentiated. In line with the new Institutionalist focus of neo-functional scholars, the supranational institutions, especially the European Commission, were seen as major forces, influencing the course and nature of integration. How far their impact actually reached, was subject to discussion. According to Dehousse and Majone (1994), the process of European integration is driven by various actors tied together by mutual dependence. The European supranational institutions (like the Commission or the Court) aren’t merely driven by national interests but they develop interests of their own aiming at their survival, growth and security (Dehousse/Majone 1994: 92-93). In addition, interest groups organised as informal networks on a transnational level play a significant role for the integration process by preparing major steps of integration and creating a demand for policy innovations (Faber 2005: 175; Dehousse/Majone 1994: 107).
Motives for integration and goals pursued through integration

According to Neo-Functionalism, the main motive leading actors to get involved in regional integration is the maximisation of welfare and the fortification of the economy. Questions of power are only of minor importance and should be overcome through the encroachment of integration from the economic into the political sphere (Giering 1997: 212).

There is lack of clarity concerning the goal of integration in neo-functionalist reasoning. From Haas' definition of integration, one can see that he envisaged the development of a new, supranational political community as the final outcome of integration (Haas 1958: 16). But with respect to specific constitutional design of this new emerging political community, disaccord exists. While amongst others Tranholm-Mikkelsen (1991: 3) argues that Haas didn’t envisage a “particular constitutional arrangement”, other authors pose that a federal order as endpoint of integration was anticipated by Neo-Functionalists (Zimmerling 1991: 90-91). The latter argue that especially in their early theoretical work, Neo-Functionalists envisaged a development of European integration towards federalism (Moravcsik 1993: 476).

But nevertheless, the controversy on the institutional structure of the envisaged new political community becomes less important as one recollects that Neo-Functionalism’s highest priority was to explain the process of integration instead of the outcome. As Giering puts it, Neo-Functionalists analyse integration under the premise of ‘the journey is the reward’ and therefore attach relatively little importance to the explanation of the outcome of integration (Giering 1997: 210).

Validity in other regional contexts

The discussion on the relevance of Neo-Functionalism in non-European areas of the world is strongly connected with the analysis of the (background-)conditions favorable for a ‘successful’ integration process (see paragraph on Conditions for Successful Integration further above). From his analysis, Haas inferred that the specific conditions existing in Europe are unlikely to be found in the same extent in other parts of the world. For this reason, Haas saw a very limited potential for the imitation of the European example in other regions (Haas 1961: 389).

This appraisal was put into perspective through Haas and Schmitter’s (1966) analysis of regional integration in Latin America. They came to the conclusion that the specific conditions prevailing in Latin America might act as ‘functional equivalents’ to the conditions in Europe. That means, although the background conditions of regional integration do not coincide with those in Europe, the existing conditions in Latin America might consequently serve the same purpose and influence the integration

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Haas’ definition of integration reads as follows: “Political integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.” (Haas 1958: 16).
process in the same direction as the specific conditions in Europe did (Haas/Schmitter 1966: 284). With the introduction of the concept of functional equivalents, Haas and Schmitter provided one opportunity for a wider application of the neo-functionalist model.

Haas and Schmitter's analysis provoked a critical response by Joseph S. Nye (1965), who applied the model to the East African case. In the light of the experiences made in Eastern Africa, he questioned the validity of the distinction between uncontroversial and controversial areas of integration as stated by then. In developing countries, so Nye elaborated, the situation is characterized by a “premature overpoliticization” (Nye 1965: 872), making policy areas which are uncontroversial in the European countries, to highly contested and symbol-laden policy issues. Amongst others, Nye also objected the missing consideration of the impact of external factors on the process of integration (ibid.: 882). Nye concluded from his critical assessment of the Haas/Schmitter model that further efforts must be made to develop a framework for the study of comparative regional integration (ibid.: 884).

Such an attempt to develop the neo-functionalist model into a valid theoretical framework for comparative analysis by eliminating its ‘European bias’ was undertaken by Nye in 1970\(^{15}\) (see also paragraph on ‘Conditions for successful integration’). He modified the original model by changing the definition of the dependent variable, breaking with the concept of a continuous integration process, and considering new conditions and political actors influencing the course of integration (Nye 1970: 797). According to Nye, the great differences in the political and economic contexts of European countries and developing countries do not impede the comparison of integration processes in both settings. Quite the contrary, a better understanding of the specific features of integration among developing countries is only possible if they’re compared to the processes in Europe with the help of a common tool – here the revised neo-functional model. But the examination of regionalism among developing countries must be guided by a differentiated analysis – while sweeping and ‘a priori statements’ must be avoided (Nye 1970: 830-831). Nye came to the conclusion that the prospects for successful economic integration in developing countries are worse compared to those in Europe. But nevertheless, integration processes are not exclusively restricted to the European countries. As a further result, he pointed out that his analysis had proven his revised neo-functional model as an appropriate tool for the comparative analysis of economic regional integration in different settings (ibid.: 835).

According to Rosamond, the neo-functional framework was explicitly developed as a theoretical tool for comparative analysis, and this orientation of Neo-Functionalism is in line with the high theoretical demand of its scholars: Because in the absence of

general propositions about the course of integration in various regional settings, Neo-Functionalism would have been a mere descriptive approach focusing on European integration exclusively (Rosamond 2005: 243).

(Liberal) Intergovernmentalism
The development of Intergovernmentalism is strongly connected to the initial failure of Neo-Functionalism in explaining stagnation of the European integration process, which became especially apparent in the middle of the 1960s. Although Neo-Functionalism and Intergovernmentalism can be seen as opposed theories, they inspired each other in the way that further theorizing by one school of thought provoked response from the other. Thus, the development of both theories is intimately connected with each other.

As a ‘state-centric-theory’, Intergovernmentalism is rooted in (Neo-)Realism and was primarily developed by Stanley Hoffmann. In the early 1990s his theory was further developed into ‘Governmental Institutionalism’ and later transformed into ‘Liberal Intergovernmentalism’ (LI) by Andrew Moravcsik. These two scholars strongly dominate the field of Intergovernmentalist theorizing and thus also constitute the focal points in the following analysis.

Theoretical self-definition
Hoffmann treated the discussion on regional integration as a sub-discipline of international relations. He therefore never pursued the aim to develop an independent theory of regional integration. In this regard his aims were completely different from those of Ernst B. Haas (Faber 2005: 108). As Hoffmann was very sceptical of the prospects for the development of a European entity in his early writings, he focused his analysis mainly on the nation-states. Therefore, he had a different analytical focus compared to Haas, who concentrated especially on the evolving supranational entity in Europe (Faber 2005: 108-109).

For Hoffmann, the ability of a theory to reproduce reality and to describe it with the help of theoretical concepts was of more importance than the power of prediction. Here, Hoffmann preferred more a descriptive model of a theory (ibid.: 104-105).

Compared to Hoffmann, Moravcsik had high expectations of a theory; this becomes apparent in his specific theoretical requirements: He stated that the development of a theory should be based on a deductive approach, an empirical evaluation of the theory should be possible, and the theory should possess the power to explain and to forecast (Moravcsik 1993: 476-477). Unlike Hoffmann, the development of a coherent theory of integration was the stated aim of Moravcsik. Nevertheless, it is subject to discussion whether Moravcsik achieved this aim or not (Faber 2005: 179; Mattli 1999: 11+29).
Conditions for successful integration

In order to allow for the success of an integration effort, the following conditions, external and internal to the nation-states, must be met (Hoffmann 1966: 904-908): Concerning the internal conditions, the integrating units must be, firstly, political communities. This requirement implies that integration within the national units has to precede the transnational/regional integration in order to overcome dividing cleavages within the national societies that might develop into an obstacle to transnational integration (ibid.: 904).

Secondly, the integrating units should be characterised by a pluralist social structure and by the existence of a strong national elite pushing for integration. And these latter requirements must be accomplished by the existence of political leaders, representing pro-integrative elites and pursuing the aim of transnational integration (ibid.: 905).

As external conditions are concerned, the similarity with regard to objective criteria is not of major importance. Instead, the affinity which is subjectively perceived by policy makers regarding, for instance, common historical and geographical experiences is of much greater importance according to Hoffmann. Here, the prospects for successful integration are better for units bearing a ‘light baggage’ with regard to their individual past. As long-standing nation-states are often burdened with historical ties and responsibilities, integration is hampered. Furthermore, a strong international involvement of the national unity might complicate integration while the existence of a common external threat can strongly promote integration (ibid.: 905-908).

Moravcsik (1991) developed his perspective of ‘Intergovernmental Institutionalism’, which was further designed into ‘Liberal Intergovernmentalism’, in the late 1990s16. In order to understand the progress of the European integration, Moravcsik argued for a three step analysis of the integration process whereas each step requires distinct theoretical tools: The examination of the evolution of national interests should be done in a first step, followed by a closer examination of the decision-making processes on the international level. The choice of the involved member states for the establishment and design of a new supranational entity should be analysed in a concluding third step (Moravcsik 1998: 20). For Moravcsik concordance in the economic interests of the nation-states is a major factor enhancing the chances for integration to occur, because nation-states are primarily driven by their economic interests (ibid.: 3). Furthermore, the relative power of nation-states in international bargaining and their desire to achieve credible international commitments are further factors determining the timing and progress of European integration (ibid.: 4).

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16 A first version of LI was developed by Moravcsik in his article “Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmental Approach” in 1993. This original concept consisted of two levels of analysis and was expanded by a third level in “The Choice for Europe” 1998.
Course of Integration

 Regarding the course of the integration process, Hoffmann stated arguments contrary to those of Neo-Functionalists. He argued that the European integration process was intended and enforced by nation-states. The course and development of European integration is completely under their control and is organised to serve their interests. These interests firstly imply the protection of national strength and sovereignty and secondly the restoration of European unity and power on the international level. In case of a conflict of these two goals, it goes without saying that the national interest has higher priority than European unity (Hoffmann 1963: 546).

According to Hoffmann, nation-states would allow for an incrementalistic proceeding of integration only in policy areas not affecting their national sovereignty, thus in areas of ‘low politics’. But a spill-over of integration into the spheres of ‘high politics’ was far from realistic in the eyes of the Intergovernmentalist (Hoffmann 1965: 90).

Under the category of low politics mainly economic policy issues were subsumed which were characterized by their relatively uncontroversial und technocratic nature. By contrast, high politics stand out for their huge potential of controversy, and classically foreign and security policies are allotted to this category.

With the differentiation between low and high politics, Intergovernmentalists opposed the early neo-functional notion of a quasi-automatic integration process. But the empirical development of European integration soon proved the static conceptual distinction of low and high politics wrong. Firstly, integration in the economic sphere didn’t turned out to be as unproblematic as assumed; secondly, European integration stepped forward into policy spheres, declared by Intergovernmentalists as controversial and highly political (Faber 2005: 97).

These developments prompted Hoffmann to revise his theoretical model in 1983. He admitted that policy areas can alter in their relevance depending on the specific situation of the nation-state, and that a stable classification of policy areas as ‘low’ or ‘high’ policies was therefore misleading. The old distinction between low and high policies was replaced by a differentiation in policy areas aiming at the maximization of a common good and policies that have the character of reciprocity and zero-sum-game respectively (Hoffmann 1983: 29-30).

As one main argument to justify the limited scope of integration efforts to relatively uncontroversial policy areas, Intergovernmentalists opposed the neo-functionalist spill-over mechanisms with the logic of diversity. According to this concept, the units of analysis – the nation-states – are characterized by distinctive differences in their national interests. These differences can be explained amongst others by the distinct historical backgrounds, specific geo-political settings, and diverse challenges the nation-states face in their domestic and international setting. Nation-states pursue policy issues of national interest autonomously in order to maximize the possibility of successful enforcement of these specific interests. They are reluctant to involve other nation-states in policy areas of vital interest as other
states might endanger the specific national aims. A common regional institution could therefore never gain the trust and confidence of the nation-states in policy areas of national importance. In major issues of national interest, the nation-states are loners, only in policy areas of minor importance are they willing to cede parts of their sovereignty (Hoffmann 1966: 881-882). For Hoffmann it was without doubt that the European Community could never substitute the nation-state. The national units would be reluctant to cede more and more parts of their sovereignty to a supranational level.

One of the main innovations to the Intergovernmentalist approach introduced by Andrew Moravcsik was the focus on the domestic level of the member states and here especially on the formation of national interests. These were no longer seen as fixed determinants but as outcomes of deliberation and competition among different groups of national actors. The national interest was thus conceptualised as a dependent variable, which primarily was influenced by existing economic interdependencies of the nation-state (Moravcsik 1993: 481).

**Main actors of integration**

In accordance with realist thinking, Stanley Hoffmann perceived nation-states as the most important actors in the international system. But states do not only serve as entities of governance and national power, internally they also provide the most important unit of identification and orientation for their citizens in cultural and social terms (Faber 2005: 92-93). Concluding from the prominent role of nation-states, any examination of regional integration efforts has to focus on the role of the nation-states as primary units of analysis.

The idea of the nation-state as the most important unit of analysis was also shared by Andrew Moravcsik. He pointed out that deliberate decision-making of the national units was solely responsible for European integration that advanced in the 1990s into the European Single Market. He perceived the nation-state as an unitary and rational actor in its external relations. At the same time he attempted to break the ‘blackbox’ nation-state by closer examining the preference formation within the national units and also taking the role of various national interest groups in the process of national-interest formation into account (Moravcsik 1993: 483-484; Moravcsik 1998: 22). Accordingly, national interest groups perceived additional consideration within the model of LI.

**Motives for integration and goals pursued through integration**

In intergovernmentalist reasoning the EC serves in the first place a very rational and pragmatic purpose: It provides the nation-states with a forum for international bargaining and negotiation to solve problems of international character and is nothing more than a highly institutionalized form of cooperation. Therefore, the process of European integration is driven and controlled by the nation-states and is completely in their interest. The nation-states benefit from the EC as it helps them to achieve a
better performance with regard to national challenges and it improves their power position within the international system. Consequently, the European institutions do not provoke the demise of the nation-state, quite the contrary they support the nation-states in their survival and their adaptability to the changing international surrounding (Hoffmann 1983: 21+35).

As a logical conclusion, the EC has no idealistic or ideological value of its own. The integration process occurring in Europe is not pre-determined or heading towards a specific final aim. Instead, integration impulses occur in fits and starts, and those in Europe are only part of a worldwide phenomenon of increasing cooperation (Cini 2003: 95).

It becomes clear that, according to Intergovernmentalists, the EC was founded on grounds of rationalistic reasoning by nation-states in order to support their existence and enhance their performance.

Form the early 1980s onwards Hoffmann incorporated in his intergovernmental scheme elements of regime theory and he characterised the EC as an international regime contributing to the survival of the nation-state (Hoffmann 1983: 35). Similar statements were made by Moravcsik, who understood the EC as an example of a successful international regime whose institutions are able to support the governments of the nation-states in various means: Not only do the European institutions enhance the efficiency of international bargaining through the reduction of transaction costs, they also improve the power of nation-states by supporting them in the effort to overcome national opposition against their policies (Moravcsik 1993: 514).

Moravcsik, furthermore, stressed the existing international economic interdependencies as a specific motivation to form and develop the EC. Here the European institutions serve the nation-states as an appropriate policy-response to answer the challenges linked with economic interdependences (Moravcsik 1993: 476).

Validity in other regional contexts

According to Hoffmann, the outlined conditions for successful integration efforts are of general significance (Hoffmann 1966: 904).

For Moravcsik the EC is a unique phenomenon but – and here he sees himself in opposition to neo-functionalist reasoning – he doesn’t see the need for a suis generis theory to explain the European integration process. Therefore, it is his stated aim to generate from the analysis of the European experiences, generalizable insights (Moravcsik 1998: 2+4).

Based on this argumentation, the potentials for generalizations from Liberal Intergovernmentalism are much higher compared to Neo-Functionalism (Moravcsik 1993: 474+477). What leads to a broader applicability of LI is, particularly, its grounding in general theories of domestic and international political economy, like regime theory or theories of international interdependence and bargaining. Through
the application of these theories for the examination of EC policies, general conditions can be derived that account for a successful integration process also in other parts of the world – therefore making a comparison of the EC with other ‘institutions’ possible (Moravcsik 1993: 477-478+519). With regard to this point, Moravcsik criticises Neo-Functionalism, which – according to him – lacks a strong generalizable theoretical foundation (Moravcsik 1993: 477).

For Moravcsik, no single theory or variable is able to generate generalizable results out of an examination of European integration. A logical conclusion from this argument is that a general understanding of the integration process is only possible with the explanatory help of different theories. On these grounds, Moravcsik supports his own theoretical approach as he draws his hypothesis from theories of economic interest, interstate bargaining, and international regimes (Moravcsik 1995: 612; Moravcsik 1998: 17).

New Regionalism Approach
Among the theoretical approaches for the explanation of regionalisation, the New Regionalism Approach (NRA) is a relatively young one, which developed out of a WIDER-UNU research project during the 1990s. Further attempts to develop a coherent theory of New Regionalism were undertaken after the project phased out by researchers of the Department of Peace and Development Research (PADRIGU) at the University of Göteborg, headed up by Björn Hettne (Marchand/Bøås/Shaw 1999: 902).

The need for a new theoretical approach dealing with processes of regionalisation was justified under reference to the second wave of regionalism, which generated from the mid 1980s on a new form of regionalism differing significantly from those of the first wave of the 1950s. But what are the major differences between the two waves of regionalism? While the first wave occurred during the Cold War Era and therefore developed in the surrounding of bipolarity, the second wave evolved in the era of globalisation under a multipolar world order. Further on, scholars of the NRA describe the Old Regionalism of the first wave as predominantly initiated by state actors. The Old Regionalism ‘from above’, thus, contrasts with the processes of New Regionalism, which developed out of voluntary, especially non-state actor’s initiatives from within the region. In addition the specificity of the Old Regionalism with regard to its predominantly economic and security objectives and its protectionist orientation is displaced by the multidimensionality of the New Regionalism and its emphasis on ‘open regionalism’ (Hettne 2003: 23-24; Hettne 2001: 7-8). On the grounds of these

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17 WIDER-UNU stands for ‘World Institute for Development Economics Research at the United Nations University’ in Helsinki. The name of the project was “The New Regionalism: Implications for Global Development and International Security”.

18 Regionalisation is defined as the “…empirical process that leads to patterns of cooperation, integration, complementary and convergence within a particular cross-national geographical space.” (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 457-458). It differs from regionalism as it is mainly driven by non-state forces and is to a lesser extent subject to predetermined strategies.
postulated wide differences between the processes of Old and New Regionalism, the need for new theoretical perspectives is justified. Scholars of the NRA state that they see current regionalisation processes from a new perspective: They underline the multidimensionality and complexity of the New Regionalism involving state as well as non-state actors. Regionalisation is not reduced to formal, predominantly state-led processes, but also informal, non-state actions, constituting the region, are incorporated into the analysis. Only through the examination of both formal and informal processes and their interaction, a comprehensive picture of regionalisation can be gained (Marchand/Bøås/Shaw 1999: 905-906).

**Theoretical self-definition**

One motivation for the development of the NRA is the critique of so called mainstream or conventional integration theories like Neo-Functionalism, Institutionalism or Economic Integration Theory. These theories are criticized, amongst others, on the grounds that they present a positivistic logic and consider the socio-economic as well as historical background factors of regionalism inadequately. Furthermore, proponents of the NRA state that these conventional theories were first and foremost developed for the explanation of regional integration in Western Europe. The validity of these theories in other parts of the world is, according to them, doubtful. The application of mainstream theories in other world regions entails the danger that regionalisation processes are judged against the European model (Söderbaum/Taylor: 2004: 2-3).

According to the statements of its scholars, the NRA aims to integrate three theoretical perspectives that were so far only considered in isolation: (Critical) International Political Economy, Development Theory, and Regional Integration Theory (Hettne/Söderbaum 1998: 6).

In their comprehension of theory, scholars of the NRA strictly reject the claims of foundational (explanatory) or positivist theories and position their own theoretical approach within the camp of reflectivist approaches to international theory (Söderbaum 2004: 15). Correspondingly, a ‘value-free’ or ‘objective theory’ does not exist to the minds of the NRA representatives. Theories are not seen as secluded from reality but rather as integral part of the real world (Söderbaum 2004: 38).

**Conditions for successful integration**

The NRA is anxious to explain the process of regionalisation in its whole complexity. Therefore, three levels on which regionalisation takes place are incorporated into the analysis (Hettne 1994: 10): Here the NRA firstly identifies the level of the world system. The process of regionalisation is interconnected with the circumstances on the global level in two ways: On the one hand, a precondition for regionalisation to unfold is that the specific structure of the world system allows a sufficient degree of leeway for regionalisation. As an example, regionalisation efforts under the condition of bipolarity during the Cold War were restricted as they had to account for the East-
West divide. On the other hand, processes of regionalisation all over the world have an impact on the structure of the world system.

On a second level, the relations between different world regions must be considered in order to analyse the nature of regionalisation. Here the regionalisation of Western Europe plays an important role as it activates further regionalisation efforts in other parts of the world in two ways: Firstly, in a positive way, the European example is generally seen as a success story provoking attempts of imitation by other regions. But secondly, in a negative way, European integration also causes fear of an emerging ‘fortress Europe’ and thus leads to regionalisation efforts of other countries as a counter measure to the perceived danger (Hettne 1994: 34-35).

Thirdly, the regional level itself is under appraisal and here the NRA states the assumption that regionalisation is best to proceed under conditions of cultural, security, economic and political homogeneity. Corresponding to the NRA, an increase in homogenization among the regional units is necessary to allow for a successful integration. For integration to start, a level of cultural homogeneity manifested in an “inherent regional civil society” is deemed necessary (Hettne 1994: 8). A shared security order is seen as a necessary but not sufficient precondition for regionalisation. And last but not least, the degree of economic and political homogenization influences the success of regionalisation. The various processes on these levels are interconnected and influence each other while the specific importance of one or the other level might vary with regard to different regional settings (Hettne 1994: 9-10).

**Course of Integration**

Scholars of the NRA use the concept of ‘regionness’ to underline the character of regionalisation as an ongoing process and to examine the evolutionary development process of a region. Although not developed as a stage theory, the evolution of a region is divided into different steps, forming a framework for analysis that allows for a comparative analysis of the level of regionness among different macro-regions. At the first level, one can talk of a potential region that forms a geographical and ecological unit and is bordered by natural physical barriers. A condition for further regionalisation to occur is a rise in the level of contact between the inhabitants of the different (national) units that can lead to a regional social system (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 462-463). As social contacts and transactions in the potential region increase, a regional complex develops. Crucial at this second stage of regionness is that the inward-orientation of the national units – characteristic for the process of nation-

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19 Regionness is defined as “…the process whereby a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interest of the emerging region” (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 461).

20 The rise in regionness has been conceptualized as a three step process (Hettne/Söderbaum 1998) as well as a five step process (Hettne 1994; Hettne/Söderbaum 2000; Hettne 2003). The conceptualization of regionness as a five stage process varies in their specific contents. The following presentation refers to the model outlined in Hettne/Söderbaum 2000.
building – is overcome in support of openness to external relations. On this stage of regionness, the existing interactions between the national units can be characterised as unstable and short-sighted (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 463). The third level, called *regional society*, is characterised by a rise in communication and transaction between the integrating units especially promoted by civil society actors. Their occurrence in the process of regionalisation is only typical for higher degrees of regionness while the lower degrees of regionness are dominated by state actors. For regionalisation to proceed, it is necessary that transactions and processes occurring at various levels and sectors are mutually reinforcing and are mutually pushing towards an increased level of regionness. This process can be actively supported by formal organisations and social institutions (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 465-466).

The fourth level, the *regional community*, is characterized by the fact that the region gains its own identity, legitimacy and structure of decision-making, and achieves the status of an active subject. The formally distinct national units are grown together into one regional entity. There is no longer a differentiation on the grounds of national units, rather between those forming part of the region and those ‘outside’. According to NRA reasoning, the achievement of the fifth stage of regionness – the emergence of a region-state – is by no means assured and is rather seen as a hypothetical endpoint of regionness. The region-state is characterized by the compatibility of different cultures and the pooling of sovereignty and entails a new political entity (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 467-468).

**Main actors of integration**

Proponents of the NRA stress the need to overcome state-centrist views on regionalism. They perceive the state and his agents as one group of actors among others in the regionalisation process. A paramount role of state forces in the integration process is not a priori assumed; instead the specific role of state agents in regionalisation must be subject to detailed research.

Under scrutiny is also the concept of national interest, which must be critically assessed – according to the scholars of the NRA – as it often represents specific group or personal interests rather than the interests of the public. Thus, a critical examination about how the so called national interest is formed is of major importance (Söderbaum 2004: 50).

Furthermore, and characteristically, the NRA stresses the great importance of non-state actors coming from civil society and the market for the process of regionalisation. This special focus on non-state forces entails that regional activities taking place in the realm of informality are also considered and analysed by the NRA. Here, it is argued that beside the state-driven formal institutional structures, which are often equated with regionalism, informal networks and activities are equally important for the building of a region. This is true especially in the context of regionalisation among developing countries.
A third group of actors can be subsumed under the heading of external actors comprising, for instance, external Non Governmental Organisations, international organisations and external nation-states not themselves directly involved in the process of regionalism. These different actors do not solely act independently from each other but also form mixed-actor constellations (Söderbaum 2004: 50-51).

Seen from a constructivist standpoint, the preferences and aims guiding the activities of the actors are not predetermined. Instead, they are shaped and influenced individually through social, cultural and historical factors. It is therefore not possible to predict the actor’s activities on the grounds of fixed and solely material incentives. In line with this understanding of reflective actors, it must be stressed that actors actively influence the specific occurrence of regionalism and might even use regionalisation as an instrument to change existing structures (Söderbaum 2004: 44-45).

Motives for integration and goals pursued through integration

The subject of analysis of the NRA – the New Regionalism – is seen as a qualitatively new phenomenon (Söderbaum 2002: 28). In order to analyse the backgrounds and the reasons of these new processes, regionalisation should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon but should rather be related to the wider process of globalisation, that has a direct impact on the activities at the regional level (Hettne 2003: 29). Within the nexus of globalism and regionalism, the NRA stands for the return of the ‘political’ on the regional level: Values like development, peace and ecological sustainability are brought back on the agenda of regionalisation by civil society actors in order to protect their needs (Hettne 1999: 22). With this perception, the NRA scholars refer to the Polanyian idea of a ‘second movement’ of civil society actors to preserve crucial values, that are challenged as a consequence of the primary movement of expansion by market forces (Hettne 2003: 31-33)21. Thus, the globalisation process entails exogenous challenges that can be met through a “regionalist response” (Hettne 2003: 29). The motives for regional integration can thus be traced back to globalisation, and the regionalist strategy is seen as one possibility to overcome negative consequences of the process of globalisation (Hettne 1999: 6).

Validity in other regional contexts

With its special focus on the informal side of regionalisation, the challenged perception of the state as dominant actor in regionalisation, and the consideration of the different levels of regionalisation, the NRA claims to account for the major features of the New Regionalism in the South, especially in Africa. At the same time, the relevance of mainstream, European-based integration theories with their strong focus on formal and state-led regional integration is questioned for the African case.

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21 Polanyi, Karl (1944): The great transformation. The political and economic origins of our time, Beacon Press: Boston.
As a consequence, the function of the European model to serve as a blueprint for regionalisation efforts in other parts of the world is challenged (Shaw et al. 2003: 193-194; Söderbaum/Shaw 2003: 212).

For the advancement of the NRA towards a mature theory, Hettne and Söderbaum stress the need for such a theory not to concentrate solely on the regional level but also to take the level of world order into consideration, as processes of regionalisation and globalisation are highly interconnected. It should also be taken into account that globalisation doesn’t evoke a unitary regional response. Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of the ‘New Regionalisms’ as there are many regionalisation and regionalism processes, each with specific characteristics (Hettne/Söderbaum 2000: 458).

At the same time, it is highlighted that a theory of regionalism should not exclusively concentrate either on the North or on the South but should offer explanatory power for a wider regional context (Söderbaum 2002: 31-32).

**Comparison and summary of theoretical arguments**

The following paragraph highlights the main arguments of the three analysed theoretical approaches with regard to the four criteria of analysis. This is done with the objective of contrasting the theoretical approaches in order to gain insight regarding their differences and common grounds. On the basis of these findings, research questions can be generated that may lead the testing of the theoretical approaches in the African context.

Regarding the fist criteria of analysis, all theoretical approaches under consideration highlight specific conditions under which processes of regionalism have a greater chance of success. In NF, Haas and Schmitter distinguish several conditions that are effective during different phases of the integration process while Nye questions the usefulness of such a separation: According to his view the impact of the different conditions cannot be temporarily terminated. Instead, he introduces a separation in process mechanism of integration and the integrative potential of a region. The latter are further divided into perceptual and structural conditions. Therefore the subjective interpretation by the integrating units of ‘objective’ facts was also taken into account by Nye. IG differentiates between conditions internal and external to the nation-states. Such a differentiation is not undertaken by the NRA; instead, the general importance of homogeneous structures is highlighted here. Both NF and IG stress that the conditions influencing the prospect of success should not only be seen as objective criteria. Instead, the subjective perception of the actors involved plays a major role.

As all theoretical approaches under consideration share the assumption that specific conditions are conducive to regional integration, the following questions arise: Firstly, are the conditions that are deemed supportive by the different theoretical approaches existent in Southern Africa? And secondly, how does the existence or non-existence of these conditions impact on chances of success of regional integration?
Concerning the course of regional integration, NF highlights the spill-over mechanism as main stimulus for integration while IG opposes this concept with the logic of diversity and the emphasis on the nation-states controlling as well as leading the integration process. Both theoretical approaches further emphasise the fact that the process of integration is dependent on the policy area which is subject to integration. The NRA presents the stage model of growing regionness that divides the integration process into different stages characterised by specific features and actor constellations.

As a starting point of the proposed analysis the concept of regionness is tested on its explanatory power. The application of this stage model to the African context serves two merits: Firstly, the practicability of this concept is examined and secondly, a detailed description of the state of regionalism in the two policy areas trade and security on the macro- and sub-national-level in Southern Africa is conducted.

It follows an empirical examination of the course and the state of integration in different policy areas. Therefore, a package of two related questions is raised for the Southern African example: Firstly, is the process of integration advanced to different degrees in different policy areas? For the analysis of this question the examples of trade policy and security policy can be consulted. And in case the first question is affirmed, a second question is attached: What are the reasons for the unequal advancement of integration in those policy areas?

With the help of those questions, the contrary theoretical assumptions of NF and IG, concerning the course of integration as well as the power and motivation of the nation-states to influence the process of integration in different policy areas, can be examined.

But one potential danger of these research questions must be stressed as well. As these questions address the ‘level’ and the progress of integration, the danger of judging African regional integration against the European blueprint must be avoided. The European example should not be taken as a benchmark; instead, the specific reality of African regional integration must be taken into account. Further questions address the role of the domestic level of the nation-states for the course of integration in order to analyse the relevance of Liberal Intergovernmentalist reasoning and the critical perspective of the NRA towards the so called national interest. Thus, it is questioned how the national interest is built and whose concerns are considered as the national interest. Further, it must be analysed how the different national interests of the involved nation-states are balanced and converted into actual integration steps.

As far as the main actors of the integration process are concerned, the theoretical approaches under consideration stress the importance of different groups of actors.

\[22\] One of the main points that have to be considered here is the fact that regionalism in Africa builds less on formal, institutionalised structures and is instead stronger characterized by informal activities.
For NF the main actors in European integration are national governments, national elites and supranational institutions. The group of actors summarized under the label of national elites thereby comprises state actors as well as representatives of civil society and the market. As the supranational institutions gained great importance during the course of European integration, scholars of NF attached special attention to this group of actors over the years.

In the tradition of realism, IG points out the extraordinary important role of the nation-states in the integration process. This focus is widened by LIG as Moravcsik also emphasizes the impact of national interest groups on the formation of the national interest.

Scholars of the NRA acknowledge the importance of the state actors in regional integration, but they show reluctance to attribute any outstanding importance to this group of actors. Instead, they point out that the impact of non-state actors coming from civil society or the market is often neglected. As the only theoretical approach, the NRA explicitly highlights the influence of external actors on regionalism. The NRA’s conception of ‘regionalism from below’ involving citizens on the ground contrasts with the conception of regional integration driven foremost by elites presented by NF and L(IG).

With regard to the main actors of integration, the following research questions are generated: Who are the most important actors in the process of African regional integration? Do the main actors of African Regionalism correspond to the actors highlighted by the theoretical approaches?

But the mere identification of the actors involved is not sufficient. Furthermore, it will be analysed which functions the different actors exercise in the process of integration and on which level they exert this influence. Here, it will be interesting to figure out whether the involved actors are organised on a transnational level, for instance, in the form of networks, on a national or even at a sub-national level. Concluding, the field of activity of the different actors must also be considered: Do they exert their influence on the process of integration in the realm of informality, or do they solely rely on formal structures?

The fourth criterion of analysis addresses the motives and goals that lead the different actors to engage in regionalism. According to neo-functional reasoning, the actors are foremost driven by the hope to increase economic welfare through regional integration. Questions of power relations are of minor importance. This view contrasts with the Intergovernmental argumentation that European integration foremost serves the power interests of nation-states and contributes to their survival. Andrew Moravcsik highlights, furthermore, the prevailing international economic interdependencies which cause challenges that can best be met through arrangements of regional integration.

Scholars of the NRA see regionalism as a chance to overcome challenges and constraints of globalisation. The ‘regional response’ is understood as a positive alternative to meet the negative effects of globalisation. Since the theoretical
approaches stress very different motives for actors to involve in regional integration, the following questions arise: What are the crucial factors that prompt actors in Southern Africa to get involved in regional integration? Do economic motives play a decisive role, or does regional integration serve the nation-states as a means to secure its power? Further, the impact of globalisation on the initiation and development of regionalism in Southern Africa is considered.

The analysis reveals further insights with regard to the applicability of the theoretical approaches. Here detailed references are made by Neo-Functionalism while IG and NRA aren’t very responsive to these aspects. But this result is in line with the theoretical self-definition of the approaches as Neo-Functionalism pursued in its early years the aim to develop a coherent theory of regional integration while LI and NRA don’t undertake such endeavours. In order to ensure the practicability of the neo-functional model, Haas and Schmitter developed the concept of functional-equivalents. Here it is highlighted that conditions and actors in the process of integration in different regions of the world don’t have to be identical, the crucial condition is instead that specific functions, which are necessary for integration to proceed, are fulfilled. The concept of functional equivalents will be considered in the testing of the theoretical approaches as it may provide a possibility to account for the very specific conditions of African regional integration. This is especially the case for the analytical criteria ‘conditions for successful integration’ and ‘main actors of integration’. Here it is quite possible that conditions and actors in the African case vary significantly from those in Europe but nevertheless fulfil supportive functions for the integration process.

In the case of Liberal Intergovernmentalism, it must be analyzed whether the claimed general significance of the theoretical ‘components’ (liberal theory of national preference formation, bargaining theory of international relations and a functional theory of institutional choice) can be affirmed for the African case.

**Some remaining questions**

With the proposed analytical framework, the relevance of different theoretical approaches for the explanation of African regional integration can be analysed. Beside the expected benefits of such an analysis two critical questions must be highlighted:

First, the issue is raised whether it is recommendable to concentrate the analysis on Southern Africa exclusively as this focus may restrain the possibility to generalise the results of the study. It is therefore debatable whether the results of the proposed analysis have explanatory power for other parts of the African continent or for other regions of developing countries. Here the discussion arises around the merits of a specialised study concentrating on Southern Africa exclusively versus a broader
study comparing different regions. The desirable scope of such a proposed analysis must be contrasted with the practical feasible scope. Further, it can be discussed whether the chosen examples of regionalism/regionalisation – the SADC and sub-national initiatives like RIFF and SDI – that provide the grounds for testing the three theories, really reflect the ‘true nature’ of regional integration in Southern Africa. It is often highlighted that regional integration processes in Africa are only considered against the European model, leading to a neglect of the mostly informal processes taking place ‘on the ground’. But for the proposed analysis at hand, it is of great importance that the informal reality of African regionalisation is appropriately incorporated. Because a testing of the argumentation of the NRA is only possible if these processes are adequately considered. But what is the best strategy to ensure that ‘real’ informal processes on the ground are incorporated into the analysis?
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