

## **Lessons from Europe on Comparative Regionalism : *Pitfalls, Potentialities & Perspectives***

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Over the past three decades the international system has witnessed deepening interdependencies (i.e. amalgamation of external and domestic considerations, the contingent nature of policy efficiency & legitimacy and a relatively decreasing effectiveness of traditional FP tools); as well as, growing complexity (i.e. a multiplication of actors and venues). This has amongst other reflected in an evolving, oft unpredictable and at times governance deprived global system. The need for enhanced targeted cooperation and consultation has led to new forms of institutionalized regional cooperation. The result has been a variety of multilevel and multilateral forms of Governance navigating an ever more multi-polar Global Order.

These evolutions have opened new mid-level analytical prospects and fostered a host of mid-range theoretical perspectives. In this regard a central element cross-cutting a variety of disciplinary outlooks has been a renewed comparative agenda which seeks to identify the specific characteristics of the different existing cooperation mechanisms by confronting both their differences and similarities underlying.

Exercises in “*Comparative Regionalism*” have been a central and widely shared – both in terms of geography and disciplines – component of this emerging research agenda. Besides the empirically established multiplication of (macro-)regional initiatives; the European experience of regional integration and its dedicated research agenda – i.e. European Integration Studies – have played an important, if at times ambivalent, role in the fields exponential development. This founding and structuring role the European experience is both an opportunity and hazard as it can in no way be broached in a teleological sense but rather as a relevant empirical laboratory of regional cooperation mechanisms. This poses a series of epistemological, theoretical and methodological questions which must be addressed. The much analysed European and (East) Asian experiences of Regional Cooperation offer a unique opportunity to both critically assess the scope of Euro-Asian comparative regionalism studies; and identify the core questions it poses.

This presentation will through the examples of European and Asian regional cooperation address the epistemological challenges associated with any comparative exercises (i.e. avoid conceptual confusion, crystallize a nomothetic or idiographic perspectives, and clearly demarcate the scope of the analysis); clarify the main sources of conceptual confusion (i.e. Euro-centrism, disciplinary short sightedness, and teleological thinking); and finally discuss methodological considerations (the risk of “story Telling and the relative, quantitative and qualitative contributions)