

## **Abstract**

Söderbaum, Fredrik, 2002, *The Political Economy of Regionalism in Southern Africa*. Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, Box 700, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. English text. 210 pages. ISBN: 91-87380-54-4.

This thesis deals with recent regionalization processes in Southern Africa. It has two mutually reinforcing aims, one theoretical and one empirical. The theoretical aim is to take some steps from what is still an explorative and rather loosely structured analytical approach, the new regionalism approach (NRA), towards a more coherent theoretical construct, a new regionalism theory (NRT). The empirical research puzzle is to analyze the social construction and deconstruction of Southern Africa in the post-apartheid, post-Cold War era, with a particular focus on by whom, for whom and for what purpose various forms of regionalism occur.

The study contains three empirical cases, which are analyzed with an eclectic combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, using a variety of primary and secondary sources. The first case deals with the political economy of contemporary regionalism in a broad sense, covering state, market, civil society as well as external actors and their relationships. The other two empirical chapters concentrate on the manifestation of the political economy of regionalism in terms of shared river basins (the case of the Zambezi) and micro-regionalism (the case of the Maputo Development Corridor).

One main result of the thesis is that an array of state, market, civil society and external actors are involved in a series of overlapping, contradictory and sometimes competing forms of regionalism. Often ruling political elites and 'big business' actors come together with certain external actors in mixed-actor coalitions in order to take advantage of economic globalization, reinforce privatization and liberalization, boost narrow regime interests or satisfy group-specific and even personal interests. Only rarely do these forms of regionalism contribute to the poor and disadvantaged, who instead opt out and survive through informal economic regionalism from below or create alternative and transformative regionalism.

**Keywords:** (title), regional integration, micro-regionalism, critical theory, constructivism, development, Zambezi, Maputo Development Corridor.

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