

# The Regionalism Quest for World Complexity

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## Introduction

**F**OR WORLD evolution, the Industrial Revolutions were always a boost in terms of both structural changes and modernization.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of these boosts, regional blocs and global convergence appear to be modern characteristics of political-institutional configurations that pursue security and economic achievements.<sup>2</sup> However, with the compression of the international environment, these characteristics start to emphasize the conversion of regional classification from strategic geography to a more “natural” sociocultural perspective. In strategic terms, the redesign of regionalism indicates that geography is no longer a political-military combination, but rather an aspect of diversification in the world system. In sociocultural terms, the diversity emphasizes existing models of cultural projection in integration designs that make a clear reference to the empirical referent of function and utility. This visible feature reveals distinct development paths existing on a regional level in conformity with international transformation. Thus, the evaluation of success or failure becomes a technical question about standards, traditions, practices, and culture as archetypes.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the impact of change on the world character makes technology, policy, and economic vectors suffer a radical shift. This is a critical transition that increases the intensity of events and introduces organizational effectiveness at the subsystem level. For regions, this means a process that imposes the improvement of the “natural” sociocultural perspective over technological implications and competitiveness adjustments.<sup>4</sup> Hence, an analysis of the degree of development and the performance of regions has become a test of the regions that adopt global interconnectivity based on the intensity of international trends.

These aspects of regional conversion due to environmental compression emphasize strategic views for adaptation to systemic changes in a performance imposed by complexity. In the globalization context, this indicates that economy and culture can define, in addition to history and policy, the character of regions over time. This is a transformative dimension that in the western and northern hemispheres run counter to the political-security logic, especially in regions where the relationship between policy and national development traditionally remains relatively high. Nevertheless, the importance of technology as a factor of creation for both countries’ performance and regional success generates considerable interest,<sup>5</sup> in particular because of transnational relations and

social interconnectivity. From a deductive perspective, this factor emerges from the complexity of the international system, which grew outside classical structures. However, from the regional perspective, this framework of complex development gives rise to some particular issues of resilience and efficiency. These issues appear to be both theoretical and practical, for which the main solution is obtained through an inquiry into the achievement of performance in the context of high interconnectivity.

To discuss the particularity of a region from a unity perspective means to eliminate systemic factors and vectors that characterize the international environment as a whole. Therefore, this paper discusses regionalism from the perspective of a framework of world configuration. The first section of the paper probes the relationship between global and subsystem processes. In the second section, we develop an analytical approach to regional spatiality and dynamics, through which we evaluate evolution models for regions based on their structural homogeneity instead of individual structures. Section three highlights the influence of the global patterns for regional integration. The last section contains the discussion and conclusion.

## Evolution and Development of Complexity

**W**ITH SOME regularity in history, systemic transformations generate trends for world reorganization in general and enhance regionalism in particular. Often, national actors view these tendencies as a necessity for developing regional integration to become resilient against novelty, which takes the form of both opportunities and potential challenges. For example, Coudenhove-Kalergi saw in the development of a “Paneurope” a logical response of cohesion aimed at giving a new sense to Europe’s development through regional integration.<sup>6</sup> Almost a decade later, in July 1937, the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Hiroshi Saito, in an official discussion with Cordell Hull, argued for the necessity of recognizing a “Monroe doctrine” in Asia from the Japanese perspective. This was a foreign affairs action aimed at ensuring order in East Asia based on Japan’s position as a major power.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, the reorganization of the world and the degree of sensitivity fueled the focus on regionalism as an act of resilience. Each affirmation of regional integration had a different perspective, but in both examples common sense was the result of a political tendency to create cohesion or unity in troubled times.

The study of international history shows us that regionalism is a form of organization that is an important feature of contemporary international relations. For national actors, this form of organization is an attempt through organized action to solve regional issues, which—in different ways—require cooperation to achieve an optimal utility function or security level. At the same time, for regional stability, systemic change is a historical quest that submits political tradition to modernity. In European history, for example, the Little Entente of 1920–1921 was a reaction against a reactionary monarchist movement supported by Hungary.<sup>8</sup> Despite its strategic weakness, the Little Entente demonstrated the potential of the modern form of organization and consolidation against isolation in

a period of transition.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the question of how much a region can serve as a model for the actors' partners is essential, especially for the achievement of strategic objectives. However, the internationalization of the world has increased the complexity emerging from the system stage to the subsystem and unit stages.

Although both transformation and complexity address global progression, they do so through different implications. Transformation is about systems' evolution through revolution, and complexity is about a structural feature that characterizes the system's structuration.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in a world with sophisticated structures, complexity tends to follow nonlinear behaviors as an act of reconciliation between the essential unpredictability of industries and the emergence of development patterns.<sup>11</sup> Because of this, between world transformation and increasing complexity, there exist several distinctions regarding structural stability and the development of progression that provide a radical overview of evolutionary processes. On a regional level, these distinctions have a cultural and security meaning highlighting the inclusive character of the region. Globally, there exist three main models that define this character. The first is East Asian integration based on the network style. This model, however, indicates a shift from a regional multilateralism that was specific to the region until the 1997 crisis, to the actual model based on the expansion of intra-regionalism.<sup>12</sup> The second is the formal institutionalism model, which can be found in Europe as an expression of regional integration based on common history<sup>13</sup> and which follows the classical trends of progressive integration. The third model, strategic regionalism, is unique to the western hemisphere.<sup>14</sup> The particularity of this model emerges from market construction based on the integration of production and a strategic trade policy, both of which are adopted by the prerogative of a regional champion because of their certain influence.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, because of international environmental compression, the development of regionalism has come to refer to a mechanism used for the improvement of regional insertion on a global level. Thus, in an era of post-hegemonic regionalism, complexity emerges as a framework that encourages strengthening the regional initiative in the production chain. However, the development of networks increases the number of specific forms of organizations based on social relations, creating fuzziness rather than order and transparency. Because of this, in the context of regional integration, complexity starts to reduce the authority and power of hierarchical structures and to decentralize the traditional configuration of structures, making it more flexible and dynamic. In many instances, the new organization of the world requires an advanced type of graph showing the properties and sensitive behaviors of a broad range of vectors that generate opportunities through challenges.

In the field of international relations, this graph is an analytical framework that computes the dynamics of regions through the lens of global complexity.<sup>16</sup> What makes this possible is the fact that world transformation places a region's processes on various spatial scales, raising some serious challenges for their institutionalization. This happens because, in the new world desktop, the system's complexity becomes both the context and the source of regional development; thus, regions re-scaling evolves into a sensitive integration theory issue. There are two reasons for the emergence of this issue. First, the political perspective of integration follows the same geographical analytical dimension

to the detriment of the reconceptualization of structures. Second, regional integration remains within a circle of reinvention in the context of world transformation and not a framework of evolution.

Nevertheless, complexity represents the reality of the globalized world and describes the increase of nonlinearity in a dependent way between system and subsystem levels. The effect of this dependence is the emergence of three axes—markets, social, and alliances—on an organization scheme, where integration has a contradictory sense of political cooperation. For the advance of regionalism, this reality generates two main consequences—a construction consequence and a performance consequence through the inducement of specialization. As a result of globalization, the relations between countries change into models of coexistence with other schemes that incorporate global elements, such as the international markets. However, there exists a clear distinction between neoliberal perspectives that push regional blocs to promote economic models fixed on capital market liberalization<sup>17</sup> and transnational designs. These changes promote regional strategies consisting of combinations that reject hierarchies to the detriment of dynamics. Regional organizations are caught in an associative process that passes through the regional space and makes their delimitation based on proximity to be a flexible variable of networks. The second consequence of complexity development is structural formalization through specialization encompassing regional cooperation and integration.

In a network, power does not mean only control but also the capacity to share creatively. Thus, industries have begun to evolve based on dynamic patterns. This in turn has started to influence actors' reactions against units in a way that has become a factor of regional integration tensions. Political models tend to assume theoretical linear relationships with controlled feedback.<sup>18</sup> However, the projection of the actors-units issue onto a regional framework does not mean that actors can modify the region state in a stable way in accordance with their wishes. The patterns of structuration work as constraints, so national actors are tempted to reduce these models to an explanatory and predictive state. Nevertheless, regional structures have their particular complexities, involving intrinsic phenomena that highlight social and cultural activities under the lens of economic dynamics.

This combination of the political issue of agent-structure and social implications reveals an intractable problem that pertains to both structured ontologies and regional identities. For example, because complexity appears as a structural feature of networks, this invalidates the assumption of neoclassical economies that rational actors act to maximize objective functions in a limited set of alternatives.<sup>19</sup> This invalidation occurs because global structures include multiple dimensions characterizing goods, services, and potential performances of actors rather than just the combination of price and quantity, which follows a traditional utility function. For regional organizations, this situation represents a double challenge. The first is the requirement for structural resilience to increase competitiveness. The second is the challenge of integration in two ways, from units to subsystem organizations and from the regional level to the global one in terms of performance. For an organization, these are not simple challenges because of regional tradition and the units' overview of development paths.

By definition, a network-based structure is a highly dynamic, open system that is susceptible to innovation, and it can change its sensitivity degree.<sup>20</sup> Understanding structural complexity and organization is the main aim of behavioral analysis. From the point of view of international reality (IR) scholars, system complexity can be understood in terms of environmental evolution. An alternative view is that complexity is due to progression in terms of utility function maximization. Theoretically, these two views are not entirely exclusive, and neither is configuration complexity. The elements that sustain hierarchies are distributed, creating a decentralization that sustains open networks in contrast with partial structures. However, the history of regions shows that complexity's impact is tied to the historical models under which the regions evolve. In this view, the openness of structures is not necessarily problematic from an objective perspective. Rather, regional actors attempt to generate an understanding of the character of the social world. In Europe's case, its development is dictated by historical relations between national actors and translation of interactions based on tradition. Meanwhile, in East Asia, actors are dependent on technology embedded in the economic-cultural context. The model from the western hemisphere contains a combinatorial formula between strategic perspective and a cultural search for the future. The turn toward complexity in regional structuration has thus been mainly due to the growth of system nonlinearity and networking, which characterize the contemporary world. In this sense, complexity became a global pattern that conditioned the evolution of regionalism into a world of networks. At the same time, complexity revealed feedback effects under a framework that included both unpredictability and sophisticated constructions such as multidimensional networks.

Complexity can thus be viewed as a bridge between world transformation and regional concerns, particularly between the anarchic state and the chaotic character of the world. Thus, awareness of the methodology of countries as bounded regions is no longer adequate to drive their interests in the transnational desktop. This fact outlines the potential of complexity to reorient regionalism theory toward performance while expressing the concern that the characteristics of regions may become outdated because of global openness. Thus, complexity can appear as a projection of the nonlinearity and unpredictability of the world in the context of interconnectivity from the subsystem level.<sup>21</sup>

## Features of Regionalism and Global Transformation

**T**HE HISTORY of international relations shows that in world politics, the tendency towards regionalism is reflective of the states' resilient effort to construct points of stability in times of powerful change.<sup>22</sup> The history of contemporary Europe contains a large set of examples of this tendency, which in most cases are correlated more with security issues and less with models of performance. Nevertheless, when regionalism is a political topic in the regional state, a clear distinction must exist between integration as a process of coordination to solve an issue and interdependence as a high level of connectivity among actors. This situation means that globalization and the tendencies toward regionalism, such as performance resilience, should not be contradictory.

Because globalization is an irreversible process, regionalism seems to lack a historical background for cultural preferences and to increase the necessity for economic-political survivors based on creative competitiveness. In this view, complexity can offer new perspectives on an issue central to regionalism theory, namely, how the region's development is affected by world transformation.

Complexity as a feature of network configuration shares common points with the attempts to find stability in change processes. The revival of regionalism in a period of high sensitivity is not something new from the perspectives of security policy and the economy. Once the unilateral view of the modernization features of global evolution is discarded, regionalism appears as the main site in which IR scholars can observe vectors of integration and autonomic tendencies for preservation against globalization. In this reaction, it is easy to distinguish conflicts in terms of integration, which shapes power relations among actors that contest their positions in a group. Yet, this does not mean that conflicts do not have a side that views cultural globalism as an attack on national identity. In this sense, however, a change can be emphasized between identity through national traditions and identity through group cultures. Both in the past and the present, these two aspects represent anthropological dimensions of a nation that follows change processes that have made regionalism an arena for world politics because of the regions' meaning as cultural resources.<sup>23</sup>

However, in a world that suffers from a compression of space, globalization and the inclination of national actors for regional autonomy should not be seen as alternatives, but rather as two interconnected models.<sup>24</sup> This view represents the evolution of the intercultural interaction between societies as an accelerating factor for a world-crossing interaction that advances economies and policies. In addressing the problem of regions in the present, scholars and politicians are tempted to turn to regional history rather than to co-evolution models. This does not make sense because, when arguing about the heritage of regions, they bring up historical idiosyncrasies between nations. For co-evolutionary models of regions, world evolution is more important because we can develop starting points for improvement by highlighting patterns of long-term continuity. Thus, scholars who examine the world as a complicated set of patterns, links, dynamics, and factors of change tend to follow more closely the analytical dimension rather than the historical narration dimension. For regional actors, however, this perspective appears to exist in a fuzzy framework between the regional narration of tradition and the history of globalization. Therefore, they are bound to find significance in a world of economic integration and putative cosmopolitanism.

Given these facts, how can we explain regional integration as a process of regionalism? The answer starts with the simple assumption that connectivity between regions is a done deal. The world calls to be discovered for its sophistication. For regions, this means that they exist in the interior of a multidimensional space that needs to be described. Thus, the question is what conditions entail a region's evolution. Two factors are essential to answering this question. First, global and regional dynamics are carefully intertwined. This affirmation is axiomatic for the security and economic sectors and tends to be a framework for the social and political sectors. The deep implications of international environmental compression and activities deregulation are an erosion

of control and order through tradition. Thus, the reality of the international environment is a context for economic competition between industrial states from the North and technological and manufacturing actors from East Asia that seek to compensate for the differences in regional integration schemas. Because regional models have diversity in their approaches, the pursuit of competitiveness through performance is not just an attempt to obtain optimal integration or to achieve other strategic objectives. From the perspective of foreign affairs, these attempts of the actors appear to be an effort to diminish contradictions over international processes. For regionalism, however, potential effects that result de facto from this competition for an actor's resilience can represent a two-sided coin. The first side increases competitiveness but with high sensitivity, especially to market dynamics, and the second one represents probable challenges due to the gap between units.

In response to spatial compression, the sustenance of regionalism in general and regional integration in particular appear as appealing both for economic and security reasons. First, because of the social interaction and the intercultural rapport between regions, this sustenance encourages intensive investments and increased trade.<sup>25</sup> Under globalization, this is a fact related to economic pragmatism and needs that are encouraged by transnational rather than traditional *Realpolitik*. Second, because the global world belongs both to political actors and societies, regionalization processes often require a balance between policy interests and societal perspectives. Therefore, often at the regional level, efficiency and performance are strengthened through cultural models of compatibility. Deficiencies are mitigated to maintain traditional nationalist forms, and the approach of global culture to openness amplifies the meaning of the form. In addition, the regional integration process and the sustenance of regionalism deepness are a viable source of dynamic consequences that accelerate socioeconomic forces as a canonical form of modernity.<sup>26</sup>

The second essential factor to explain regional integration as a process of regionalism is that the compression of the international environment is a continuous and uncontrolled process. This compression is happening on a global level based on a schema of interconnected models. When and how this phenomenon started is irrelevant. What is important for our paper is that globalization changes how conditions entail in a region's evolution. We discuss globalization as a series of phenomena and effects from the global to the regional level, analyze the consequences of units' position in the world and compare regional performances, and draw hierarchies based on distinction. However, the conditions of world transformation and a region's evolution can be said to exist only in the case of a multidimensional environment that generates integrative intensity. Thus, in the absence of a configuration center-periphery or superpower control, the leader-performer rapport appears to assure the utility function of construction, a model of chain reaction. In this type of model, the utility function as a general mechanism is modified with a performance function established on interconnectivity flows. Therefore, the performance historicization of the outlook for the future could generate a change in the perspective of the role of regionalism in world transformation.

The outcome of this second factor is the framework of entanglement on a global scale. This framework is strong and continues to take over the entire set of economic

activities and to submit a large set of associations to the transnational framework. At this point, under the forces of interconnectivity, the insularity of regions tends to disappear in the connected history of international environments. For the development of regionalism, this is a call for a paradigm of global sensitivity (i.e., nonlinearity and unpredictability). In a hyper-connected world, regional integration is not a perfect process but one filled with tension because of the conflict between cultural tradition and the new global perspective of social pragmatism. Through this paradigm, I highlight the projection in space of environmental compression. The most crucial aspect of regional integration is that globalization ends the multi-centric, imperial, and commercial expansion of powers. Instead, thanks to the forces of global markets, there emerges a buffer in time and space that expands the interconnectivity and links among manufacturing chains.<sup>27</sup> This in turn produces an increasing connection between actors and markets based on specialization, creativity, and innovation.<sup>28</sup> For regions, this is a period when influence and power are translated through “performance centers.”

## The Science of Regional Processes

**T**HE LACK of geographical borders allows for functional connections, transnational links, and externalization to be the main vectors favoring the development of regionalism. For a concentrated structure, an approach based on specialization can decrease the sensitivity resulting from the dependence on distribution chains. In this sense, a geographical concentration of production diversity represents a factor that can increase the essential advantages of the appearance of regional agglomerations, complexes, and networks. Because globalization is not about policy-military pairings even if the phenomenon contained, the development of technological paths, as an instrument of economic growth, is contingent upon actions and interactions between societies with developers. From the transnational perspective, the region’s integration has two dimensions, a political one and a developmental one. The second one is dominated by these relations between societies and developers and producers and consumers, who take different positions and decisions and, most important, can have different perspectives on economic issues or the sense of integration. The case of Brexit is relevant to this perspective. Interaction to ensure performance is an integrational model of attainment that establishes different paths for development, clustering both national and regional trajectories toward the interests of the unit. Thus, the ideological framework on which regionalism rests is combined with and often exceeds the cultural doctrine that offers a baseline for interrelations among actors. This is the condition imposed by world dynamics that makes available regionally clusters following economic growth.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of Asia, its trade dynamics is structurally dependent on the United States and the European Union. Similarly, EU markets are sensitive to American politics and financial affairs and Asian export trends. The United States reacts to oil prices in the Middle East but is wary of European openness and East Asian competitiveness. This is a triangular pattern with multiple facades that graphically emphasize the growth of



global regional production based on sensitive dependencies of specialization that generate alliances. The evolution of transnational relations has accelerated the massive relocation of activities, putting the national actors in situations where they need to establish new features for their relations. This is not resilience, but rather a management reaction to the growing complexity of current interconnectivity. The increase in sensitivity through modern types of relations is a contemporary structural condition arising from the complementary relationship between markets and infrastructure knowledge. In terms of performance and evolution, for regions, the global situation is a challenge that does not pertain to their choices but rather to their capacity to test the limits of the unit's policy. However, this challenge contains some serious analytical ambiguity: the degree of interaction regulation is not entirely recognized at the legislation level. Therefore, the perceptual dimension of the regional system is often in a tense relationship with the performance objectives of integration.

Nevertheless, along with regional integration and the regionalism perspective, the set of ties between units expands throughout the world. Regional integration is achieved through this method, and it is marked by three intersecting developments. The first is that supply networks are based on a model of producer alliances on the one hand and the emergence of technology websites that include zonal hubs, both in the north and south, on the other. Second, because of Industry 4.0, these two developments can be more effectively analyzed from the perspective of emerging alliances rather than economic blocs. This fact highlights that world transformation and regionalism are interrelated in an open process and not in an isolated one. However, for the regional integration process, only these two developments, even though they can create stability, remain agnostic attempts at finding possible solutions.<sup>30</sup>

The last intersecting development that offers complexity is an internal pairing between the sociocultural dimension of a region and foreign factors translated through policies. Anthropologically, this combination offers a sense of regional identity that occasionally can be accentuated by the actions and attitudes external to the region.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, this creates some ambiguity about the region as an organizing concept. Because post-hegemony and technology canceled the condition of geographic proximity, regularity and intensity of interaction remain the baseline for the assurance of a shared perception in a subsystem model of regions as a distinct dimension of sociocultural operationalization. The triangulation of these three developments is overlapped by features of transnational desktops. From the perspective of proximity, this triangulation maintains the classical description of the region. However, the connection among regions is extended to proximity to a wide range of complex shares and diversified flows of socioeconomic aspects with a high political salience.

Meanwhile, the concept of regionalization is disputed by triangulation for one reason. While ambiguity complies with heritage, in analyses of perception, fuzziness remains at the same level as that of regions. Fuzziness refers to the clash of perspectives on the importance of culture in a development-performance pair. Additionally, internal and external economic factors influencing transnational relations between regions bring forward an alternative perspective that focuses on nominative factors that are distinct from historical factors. How, for example, did these external factors encroach on Euro-

pean regionalism constituting or undermining the particularities of European regions? In essence, Industry 4.0 describes a process of digital transformation based on intelligent networking, integrating technologies in operational activities. For the European Union, Industry 4.0 and the development of networking from the global to the regional is a new transformation vector in the sense of the continuation of innovative processes. Thus, the divergence between creativity and competencies generates a selective process among regions in terms of evolution capabilities. Each region and each actor are aware of an individual industry-nexus formed out of competence, specialization, and labor force complemented by public strategies that can provide different types of support for resilience mechanisms. However, the regions need to be covered through a connection of supply chains that can prevent shortages. In the case of Europe, there exists a simultaneous tendency toward a de-concentration of important centers within networks. This situation has continued to deepen over time as societies try to match creative opportunities through global networking rather than regional systematization. From an analytical perspective, this situation is a factor that contributes to the continuity of uneven development and divergent tendencies between European regions. Thus, there appears to be a discrepancy between subsystem organizations trapped in a dilemma about continuing the integration process to increase cohesion and performance versus assuring the development of innovative societies such as the Visegrád Group. At the same time, there exist players such as Benelux that, due to their position on global chains, are in a position to further develop their degree of participation.

The literature on the effects of triangulation of economic penetration, the emergence of technological webs, and the changes of the sociocultural framework over the regionalization process often aims in the same direction in Europe. It analyses the patterns of complexity and resilience within and among different dimensions of regions in its overview of world transformation, applied to structuration.<sup>32</sup> Theoretical representations that focus on strategic objectives and infrastructure factors encounter difficulties in the recognition of regional networks. Furthermore, political analysis is not helpful in all cases. Regions are not constructed only in terms of *Realpolitik* but are also based on historical identities and social dynamics, which in the context of globalization appear to be the main forces of economic cohesion to achieve performance aims. In 1968, Nye argued that regional boundaries reflect changing powers, norms, and the interests of political leaders.<sup>33</sup> A few decades later, Huntington examined regionalism in terms of the difference among cultural identities.<sup>34</sup> Today, regionalism is equivalent to the emerging framework of global structuration and production. One serious obstacle to understanding regional processes in a compressed international environment is proving their feature as an analytical desktop in a sophisticated construction. Regionalism remains best represented through a perspective that combines both the integration process of units and relations within and beyond regions. The historical descriptions of the sociocultural framework and the analytical perception of the evolutionary models of regions have considerable plausibility. It is a mistake to focus on either regional or external factors and to neglect combinatorial aspects. It is the interplay of three dimensions, world transformation, compression of the international environment, and the historical evolution of regions, that has modeled the reality of regions in today's globalized world.

## Conclusions

**T**HE PERSPECTIVE of complexity in the global environment offers a new outlook on a subject that is central in IR theories: system reconfiguration during world transformation. The complexity of the international environment certainly influences the overview of regionalism from the geostrategic perspective and undoubtedly influences regional integration processes. It does, however, contradict some classical postulates of previous political approaches and allows a broadening of new taxonomies of regional theorizing, including the impact of the emergence of nonlinearity on regional evolutions.

Theorizing the regions' role in world with an assumption about the competitiveness and performance of units in an attempt to increase predictability tends to conceptualize the world as a unique nest. The social and economic image of this construction is assumed in terms of hyper-connectivity with a complex set of dynamics and high sensitivity to social-security terms of the consequences of evolution. Such a multidimensional construction with a large set of actors tends toward stability through regional configurations that can be cohesive and self-producing of performance for development. A further assumption about regionalism as an analytical framework and regional integration as a process views world intensity as characterizing global dynamics by imposing trends and creating uncertainty. Thus, a new theory about regions as elements of world structuration can generate alternative patterns to the political perspective regarding unpredictability. Policy and security offer regional openness to the international system in terms of vulnerability and power. On the other hand, the complexity of the environment opens new paths for the conceptualization of regional integration and the significance of regionalism as a label of subsystem parts in the world overview.

The complexity of the international environment introduces for world regions a large variety of spatial scales that involve the interaction process of regions in a logic of system transformation that follows nonlinearity and network patterns. This new evolution model circumscribes regionalism to a development that holds a modern perspective for co-evolutionary trends from combinations of international structures. Therefore, for the achievement of regionalism, the sensitivity of conditions that result from system complexity draws attention to a very different perspective on the meaning of the region to that adopted by traditional IR paradigms. This highlights the shift requested by societies and non-state actors to sustain a historical account of regionalism with an individual pragmatism focused on major results. This view can be labeled as a modern account of high-preference path dependencies rather than a regional history that focuses on the paired development of regions and institutions together in time.

In a general form, system theory makes precise reference only to components, interaction patterns, and their structuration. The introduction of complexity copes with the difficulty of incorporating structures such as regions and processes. However, for transformation, stability points, and changes of regions, the introduction of complexity means a change in conceptualization offering the advantage of operating a variety of unit dimensions. The emergence of nonlinearity allows for greater flexibility in over-

looking regional development and regional integration from the perspective of world transformation. Thus, projecting global features at the subsystem level and showing how the sensitivity of conditions generates limits and evolutionary vectors reveal how regions conceptualize global evolution, and how the international environment affects the agent-structure debate in the light of complexity.

In the end, there needs to be a balanced template between historical perspective and the projection of pragmatism in the future of regionalism. In this sense, regionalism and regional integration, despite their common history, need to be discussed in a modern framework that allows the conceptualization of world evolution. An operational framework admits an analysis of contrasts in terms of evolutionary models and inclusive network structures rather than political achievements. Through it, important commonalities can be emphasized, including the advantages that structural perception enjoys over institutional integration. If the compression of the international environment pushes regions to be more open, then transnational relations transform interconnectivity into an anti-essentialist framework that conceptualizes the world as a monolithic construction in a non-totalizing framework. With sophisticated characteristics, this new type of construction emphasizes that regions leave behind their autonomy of internal processes and implement a combative approach between different levels of reference. This fact, however, increases tensions on sociocultural subjects, especially identity and traditional issues, but it has the advantage of offering a co-evolutive overview of the role of regionalism in world transformation.



## Notes

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### **Abstract**

#### The Regionalism Quest for World Complexity

In analyses of world structuration, complexity is becoming an actual feature of international reality (IR). As IR scholars explore the limits to the understanding of the character of the world and its structure, the conceptual source of complexity appears essential for the study of world subsystems. In this article, we examine maps that are viable to test the character of regionalism and regional integration in the context of world transformation. For this, we consider, through a computational model of expression, the structure of ontologies and the questions raised by the development of complexity in the context of the evolution of regions. The article argues that beyond history and political metaphor, the recognition of complexity through a theoretical basis of nonlinearity implications can improve a system logic that eschews the limitations of classical instantiations of regionalism theory and their role in the world.

### **Keywords**

regionalism, regional processes, environmental compression, nonlinearity, co-evolutive models