6. Regional Integrations and multilateralism

GIOVANNI RAMUNNO

Title: *Rethinking the Sovereign - State Model*

Abstract: Taking into consideration the less conducive geopolitical context that has contributed to the steadily declining faith in multilateralism, this study delves into the institutional dynamics of regionalism looking for possible new ways to improve our collective ability to manage today's risks. In the same tone, great powers holding the veto right at the Security Council are falling into a zero-sum game, as they no longer see fellow states as equals or as necessary partners, thus eroding the international system to democratic principles like equality and fairness.

On the flip side, we have observed a wide community represented at the UN General Assembly, craving for good governance and making appropriate recommendations to Members States for collective measures in case of disagreement among the permanent members of the Security Council, wherein states become so reliant on their respective alliances (if not blocks) to meet their needs, and so willing to let bureaucrats make decisions and run the show, that they no longer engage with their fellow states to solve problems, instead devolving into total dependence on the great powers. In this scenario, we induce a stagnant global society that provides a surface-level equality at the cost of healthy competition and risk-taking innovation. As such, states lose the important democratic principles of self-determination and personal responsibility.

For a vibrant and adaptable democracy, we have to strike a balance, between intergovernmental agreements and a broader participation of single states in international *fora* and international organizations.

That is possible due to the fact that interdependence induces a balance of power as all actors mutually are reliant on each other; in this framework, cooperation would be averting our typical default mode which has been to ignore imbalances - economic, political, racial - until they reach a critical mass and result in a violent recoil in the opposite direction.

Stemming from a liberal institutionalism approach the present work portrays states as embracing international institutions and regimes, facilitating cooperation between states institutions, as means to solve collective action problems.

In this respect, liberal institutionalism argues that cooperation is feasible and sustainable. Liberal institutionalists highlight the role of international institutions and regimes in facilitating cooperation between states.

Therefore, norms and rules can exert an effect on behaviour of actors in world politics even if they do not embody common ideals but are used by self-interested states and corporations engaging in a process of mutual adjustment.

The UN peace and security pillar is undergoing a restructuring effort to better fulfil its central role in helping to prevent violent conflict and reduce large-scale human suffering. Further, globalization requires effective governance, this paper is a contribution to the debate on the design institutions for a polity of unprecedented size and diversity and institutions that also meet standards of accountability and participation, fostering persuasion rather than rely on coercion. Insights from branches of political science as diverse as game theory, rational-choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and democratic theory can help political scientists understand how to design effective world institutions respectful of the human being.

ARJAN VAN DER WAAL

Title: *Serpentine Regions – research contributing to building a political public sphere across borders, based on civic and citizens participation*

Abstract: The wars on Corona and in Ukraine putting fresh pressure on the European international constellation. It maintains the continent as a field lab for rethinking post- and supranational political architecture. The European Democracy Lab, under the scientific auspices of the University of Salento, is taking part in research exploring ingredients for a new post-national, horizontal, decentralised texture that can interweave the European continent and beyond.

If we follow Giorgio Agamben, approach Europe archaeologically and scrape off 300 years of national layers, we uncover a Europe that consists of regions and free cities. From Trieste to Venice, Rotterdam to Augsburg, Hamburg to Gdansk, Vienna to Budapest, Cordoba to Bordeaux. Jan Bierhoff coined the term 'Serpentine Regions' for the modern-day version of such interconnected strings of regions.

The central question of the research is what can shape a horizontal network of autonomous regions and metropoles, and under what conditions. Physically, they can be connected by infrastructure, but what interconnects them beyond? And what are the conditions fostering such interconnection?

As Menasse said: 'Homeland is region. Nation is fiction'. In the project context, we opt for a pragmatic, citizen-centred definition of 'region'. We speak of regions as the geographical entities where people feel connected, that they identify with, that have a shared history, culture or experiences and where, the socio-economic factor, they live and work. This could refer to a metropolitan area, a province, part of a country or even a small country. Two of the case study encompass a sea, giving rise to a sub-question of whether this constitutes a border or a bridge.

In terms of architecture alone, the European similarities are striking: on whatever square or street you stand, you will find the same art deco, the same sandstones, and the same house entrances and courtyards. European regions have their own cuisines, but with striking similarities. Such as the stew, sometimes called pot-au-feu, sometimes minestrone, sometimes Gemüse-Eintopf. It is not accidental that the first of our case studies explored a cultural interconnection: the collaboration between theatres in Montenegro, Albania and Puglia, the Southern border Serpentine.

The other case studies are the Celtic Serpentine, which interconnects Ireland, Scotland and Nothern-Ireland; the Galician Serpentine, interconnecting Lviv Oblast and south-eastern Poland; and the Low Lands Serpentine, interconnecting Flanders and the southern part of The Netherlands.

The project uses investigative research and storytelling techniques to write up future scenarios, presenting the imagined regional change routes. Citizens' experiences and insights are the central sources. Entities involved can be community-based initiatives, civil society organisations, or small and medium-sized enterprises – these are the actors most suited to inform lasting, democratic cross-border cooperation with defined end goals and flexibility in their strategies. Public institutions play mainly a facilitating role.

The research applies a three-stage approach. First, it explores standing interaction and collaboration practices: what presently occurs regarding interregional contacts and initiatives. Secondly, what would happen once the right conditions are in place: is there a desire or need for more and other cross-border interaction, on what issues, topics or themes, and what barriers would need removing? And finally, we ask citizens for their hopes, ideas and ambitions in relation to connecting regions.

With interview-based scenarios and feedback, the project will produce an elementary future scenario for each cluster of regions or Serpentine. Thus offering tools to piece together a possible horizontal, decentralised texture underneath the roof of a supranational democracy.

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