

# Embedding regional actors in social and historical context: Australia-New Zealand integration and Asian-Pacific regionalism

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## **Abstract:**

The regionalization of the world economy is one of the most important developments in global governance in the past two decades. This process has seen 'inter-regional' economic agreements emerge between two or more regional groupings. Drawing mainly on the European Union's external relations, observers accordingly point to the growing importance of regional actors, explaining their agency (or 'actorness') with regional attributes such as (supranational) institutional design, size, and member state cohesion. This article challenges this dominant explanation of regional agency. It argues that regional actors are socially, politically and historically 'embedded'. Agency reflects the contingency of regional integration processes, the motivations that underpin those processes, and the specific relationships between regions and third-parties. This approach explains an important case of inter-regionalism from the Asia-Pacific: CER-ASEAN relations. Since the early 1990s, Australia and New Zealand have used their 'Closer Economic Relations' trade agreement for relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This reflects the ambitions of Australasian officials to shape processes of Asian-Pacific regionalism, and the interests of ASEAN officials in consolidating their own process of transnational market-making. Here, regional agency owed to a transforming world economy and the reconceptualization of regions within new networks of trade governance.

## **Keywords:**

Asia-Pacific, Australasia, embeddedness, European Union, inter-regionalism, regional integration

## Introduction

Regionalism has become a prominent characteristic of global economic governance during the past twenty-five years. We see this in the dramatic growth of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and contentious ‘mega-regional’ deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).<sup>1</sup> Through its involvement in numerous international economic negotiations, the European Union (EU) has been an important participant in these developments. In trade as in other areas, the EU has become an important actor in world politics. Such regional agency, often called ‘actorness’ or ‘actorship’,<sup>2</sup> has not been exclusive to the EU. If we understand instances of regional agency as those where states choose to formally coordinate some aspects of their foreign policies as a regional grouping rather than doing so independently, it seems that regional organizations and less formal groupings are increasingly developing the capacity to act in world politics.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this rising importance of regionalism, we still have a relatively limited understanding of when, how, and why states choose to coordinate as regional groupings. This is problematic given that regionalism has not only become more prominent, but also more political: witness the electoral backlash against trade agreements and trans-national economic integration in the United States and Britain during 2016. Drawing primarily on the EU’s external relations, scholars of regionalism and inter-regionalism usually understand regional agency as a function of regional attributes such as size, the design and quality of regional institutions, cohesion of member states’ goals on different issues, and the degree of regional integration. To these attributes are sometimes added external factors such as ‘presence’, ‘identity’, and ‘recognition’. This

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<sup>1</sup> ‘PTAs’ in general should not be confused with the ASEAN PTA in particular.

<sup>2</sup> Mathew Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism: Patterns of Engagement* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Björn Hettne, ‘Regional actorship: a comparative approach to interregionalism’, in Francis Baert, Tiziana Scaramagli, and Fredrik Söderbaum (eds), *Intersecting Interregionalism: Regions, Global Governance and the EU* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), pp. 55-70.

<sup>3</sup> Merran Hulse, ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union: Comparing the International Trade Actorness of SADC and Ecowas’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52:3 (2014), pp. 547-65.

approach has been used to explain that while large, wealthy, highly integrated regions with centralised supranational institutions (namely, the EU) have often been effective regional actors, agency is more difficult for regional groupings that lack these characteristics. The problem with this approach is that there is a temptation to develop ‘benchmarks’ based on European experience, whereby non-European regions are judged relative to the European case.<sup>4</sup> In part because of this, deviant cases—those instances where regions lacking requisite characteristics nevertheless demonstrate agency—are left under-explained. Ironically, this approach may ultimately also make it more challenging to explain variation in the EU’s ability to act effectively, as in its ability to conclude trade deals.

Taking inspiration from a ‘deviant’ case, this article challenges the dominant approach towards understanding regional agency, arguing that it pays insufficient attention to the context in which action takes place. Downplaying the importance of context contributes to an incorrect view of regional actors as atomised agents that either do, or do not possess the capacities for external action. Against this view, this article argues that regional actors are ‘embedded’<sup>5</sup> in ongoing systems of social, political and historical relationships in world politics. This implies a context-driven and relational approach to understanding agency. Regional agency reflects idiosyncratic—and contested—processes of regional integration. These processes are often contingent on, and motivated by, wider processes of global change. Furthermore, the specific relationships in which regional actors are embedded makes regional agency an emergent property of regions’ relationships with third parties.

This approach better explains an under-studied, but important, case of inter-regionalism from the Asia-Pacific. Since the mid-1990s, Australia and New Zealand have engaged ASEAN (the Association of

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<sup>4</sup> Amitav Acharya, ‘Regionalism beyond EU-centrism’, in Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), ch. 7 (online); Shahar Hameiri, ‘Theorising Regions through Changes in Statehood: Rethinking the Theory and Method of Comparative Regionalism’, *Review of International Studies* 39:2 (2013), pp. 313–35.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Granovetter, ‘Economic Action and Social Structure: the Problem of Embeddedness’, *American Journal of Sociology* 91:3 (1985), pp. 481–510.

Southeast Asian Nations) jointly as ‘CER’, the colloquial term for the 1983 Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA). This is not an unimportant event on the fringes of world politics. This process has led, among other outcomes, to the 2008 ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA)—the most comprehensive of ASEAN’s ‘+1’ agreements—which Australia and New Zealand negotiated jointly as ‘CER’.<sup>6</sup> The AANZFTA forms one of the pillars of a mega-regional trade agreement currently under negotiation, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which brings together ASEAN and six Asian-Pacific partners.<sup>7</sup> As the most ambitious of the agreements currently linking these sixteen states, AANZFTA may play an important role in shaping the outcome of RCEP negotiations. The influence of CER on Asian-Pacific integration is not empty conjecture. Following the negotiation of AANZFTA, the CER-ASEAN Integration Partnership Forum (IPF) has been used as a platform for policymakers, politicians and academics to share lessons from Australasian integration with the goal of influencing ASEAN integration.<sup>8</sup> As some observers have pointed out, CER-ASEAN relations are a largely overlooked pathway by which ideas about regionalism have travelled from Europe, via Australasia, to the Asia-Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

Seen from the conventional perspective however, the use of CER for inter-regional cooperation is surprising. CER does not have the characteristics of a regional actor outlined above, which one influential

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<sup>6</sup> The comprehensiveness of AANZFTA relative to ASEAN’s other agreements is based on the Design of Trade Agreements (DESTA) database, presented in Andreas Dür, Leonardo Baccini, and Manfred Elsig, ‘The Design of International Trade Agreements: Introducing a New Dataset’, *Review of International Organizations* 9:3 (2014), pp. 353-75.

<sup>7</sup> The ten members of ASEAN are Brunei, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The six ‘+1’ states are Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

<sup>8</sup> New Zealand MFAT, ‘The ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum’ (2016), available at: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/south-east-asia/association-of-south-east-asian-nations-asean/the-asean-cer-integration-partnership-forum/> accessed 20 June 2016.

<sup>9</sup> John Leslie, ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design: Australasian Policymakers, Europe and Asian-Pacific Economic Integration’, *Asia-Europe Journal* 13:2 (2015), pp. 193–210.

observer summarises as a combination of ‘regionness’, ‘presence’, and ‘actorness’.<sup>10</sup> The combined market size of the two CER members is relatively small, CER has no membership in international institutions, and while the depth of ‘trans-Tasman’ economic integration is comparable to that of Europe,<sup>11</sup> CER is not normally regarded by its own members or by others as a platform for third-party engagement.<sup>12</sup> Trans-Tasman integration has also not produced the sort of centralised institutions associated with the EU. Less agency may be required to sign trade agreements relative to other activities, but this does not mean that doing so is easy or costless. Other regions have struggled to successfully coordinate on trade agreements,<sup>13</sup> and Australia and New Zealand have not chosen to pursue joint trade negotiations with other third parties. Why was CER used for relations with ASEAN? How does the predominantly EU-based literature on regional ‘actorness’ help to explain this case, and what insights does the CER-ASEAN case have for this wider literature?

Borrowing from the work of Mark Granovetter, this article argues that CER-ASEAN relations illustrate the embeddedness of regional actors: regional agency is shaped by ongoing processes of regional integration and by specific relationships between regions and third-parties. The CER-ASEAN relationship reflects Australasian ambitions of participating in processes of Asian-Pacific integration, which have underpinned trans-Tasman integration since the 1980s. Recognition of CER by ASEAN also supported internal transformations in Southeast Asia and the consolidation of the newly formed ASEAN FTA

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<sup>10</sup> Hettne, ‘Actorship’. This article uses the term ‘agency’ as a more neutral alternative to ‘actorness’ or ‘actorship’, terms which have come to be associated with a specific literature dealing with the EU’s foreign policy.

<sup>11</sup> John Leslie and Annmarie Elijah, ‘Does N = 2? Trans-Tasman Economic Integration as a Comparator for the Single European Market’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50:6 (2012), pp. 975-93.

<sup>12</sup> While Australia and New Zealand also cooperate with the countries of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) through a CER-Mercosur dialogue, this has so far resulted in no concrete outcomes. May 2017 saw the resumption of CER-Mercosur talks after a five-year hiatus: ‘Mercosur resumes trade talks with Australia and New Zealand’, *MercoPress* (6 May 2017). Available online at: <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/05/06/mercotur-resumes-trade-talks-with-australia-and-new-zealand>.

<sup>13</sup> The breakdown in trade negotiations between ASEAN and the EU after 2009 is an obvious example, as is the current difficulty faced by the EU in concluding agreements with Canada and the United States (US).

(AFTA). Finally, Australia and New Zealand adapted their informal and decentralised institutions to fit ASEAN's own norms of informality. Such cooperation cannot be separated from the wider transformations in the governance of the global economy, including the increasing dynamism of Asian-Pacific economies and the rise of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) as an important form of trade institution. In each other, ASEAN and CER countries found a regional partner that enabled them to respond to these transformations, advancing their own interests in ways that were appropriate to past patterns of regional and inter-regional engagement.

Accounting for the embeddedness of regional actors provides a way of integrating insights from studies of the EU's inter-regional relations and insights from non-EU cases by linking regional attributes to the context for action. As Amitav Acharya recently pointed out, the widespread assumption that non-European regional integration has been driven by similar interests as integration in Europe ignores a diversity of motives for regional integration.<sup>14</sup> Reinserting these motivations into an analytical framework for understanding regional agency contributes to the growing comparative literature on regional integration and inter-regionalism. In doing so, this approach also furthers our understanding of how 'regionalism' and 'inter-regionalism' affect one another. Regional actors' efforts to influence broader processes (for example, the evolution of the international trade regime) in which regions are embedded changes the context and incentives for subsequent regional action or regional (dis-)integration. Even in the EU—where a highly-developed bureaucracy and other regional attributes make it a capable actor in trade policy—the ability of trade negotiators and policymakers to conclude negotiations is constrained by the influence of past agreements on current agreement design; by domestic debate about the appropriate scope of European integration and third-party trade agreements; and by the interplay between these factors. The following section places the study of regions-as-actors in comparative and historical perspective, and develops the

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<sup>14</sup> Acharya, 'Regionalism beyond EU-centrism'.

theoretical framework. This is then illustrated with the CER-ASEAN case. In the conclusion, I return to the wider context of regionalism in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to debates about how to study these processes.

### **Regions as actors in comparative perspective**

Dominant perspectives view regional agency as a function of regional attributes, usually ‘regionness’, ‘presence’ and ‘actorness’.<sup>15</sup> Regionness refers to internal cohesion and identity;<sup>16</sup> presence refers to the passive impact of a region’s importance (GDP, size, and so on);<sup>17</sup> and actorness refers to the structures (institutionalisation) of a region that enable decisions to be made and acted on.<sup>18</sup> This approach does not ignore context: identity, recognition and presence involve situating the region in external context. Yet, context is often understood in an under-socialised way in which the identities and preferences of regions’ interlocutors, and the nature of the relationship between regional actors, are granted little analytical leverage. This approach risks providing an atomistic view of regional actors that, while appropriately referring to external factors to understand processes of regional integration, subsequently makes light of the context in which such actors might operate. Consequently, it is difficult to explain cases in which regional actors do not meet the theoretical expectations for ‘actorness’ or agency, but do in fact act in the world: there is a missing theoretical link between these regional attributes and regional agency. This section argues that this missing link is the embeddedness of regional actors.

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<sup>15</sup> Mathew Doidge, ‘Interregionalism and the European Union: conceptualizing group-to-group relations’, in Francis Baert, Tiziana Scaramagli, and Fredrik Söderbaum (eds), *Intersecting Interregionalism: Regions, Global Governance and the EU* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), p.44; Hettne, ‘Actorship’.

<sup>16</sup> Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Theorising the Rise of Regionness’, *New Political Economy* 5:3 (2000): pp. 457-72.

<sup>17</sup> David Allen and Michael Smith, ‘Western Europe's Presence in the Contemporary International Arena’, *Review of International Studies* 16:1 (1990), pp. 19-37.

<sup>18</sup> Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*; ‘Interregionalism’.

### *Comparing regional actors*

This article joins a growing literature on non-EU or comparative cases of inter-regionalism.<sup>19</sup> Such scholarship confronts the challenge of generalizing theoretical frameworks drawn predominantly from European experience,<sup>20</sup> a challenge that has been a defining feature of the study of regionalism since the early stages of European integration.<sup>21</sup> In the context of understanding regional agency, this sometimes results in dichotomising European/non-European experiences,<sup>22</sup> and frequently results in a reliance on empirical material from the EU to the detriment of insights from non-European cases.<sup>23</sup> By emphasising embeddedness as a link between regional attributes and the context for action, this article attempts to avoid using European experience as a 'benchmark'.<sup>24</sup> Doing so acknowledges the plurality of motivations for regional projects,<sup>25</sup> which may ultimately find their expression in efforts by regional groupings to develop agency.

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Adelman 'Beyond aid and trade: theoretical and practical perspectives on SADC external relations', in Anton Bösl, Willie Breytenbach, Trudi Hartzenberg, Colin McCarthy and Klaus Schade (eds), *Monitoring Regional Integration in Southern Africa* (Stellenbosch: Tralac, 2009), pp. 26-42; Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*; Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff, and Jürgen Rüländ (eds), *Interregionalism and International Relations* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2006); Hettne, 'Actorship'; Merran Hulse 'Actorness beyond the European Union'; Andrea Ribeiro-Hoffmann, 'Inter- and transregionalism', in Börzel and Risse (eds), *Comparative Regionalism*, ch. 27; Uwe Wunderlich, 'The EU an Actor Sui Generis? A comparison of EU and ASEAN Actorness', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50:4 (2012), pp. 653-669.

<sup>20</sup> Doidge, 'Interregionalism': 51; Baert et al., *Intersecting Interregionalism*.

<sup>21</sup> Ernst B. Haas, 'International Integration: the European and the Universal process', *International Organization* 15:3 (1961), pp. 366-92; Philippe De Lombaerde, Fredrik Söderbaum, Luk Van Langenhove, and Francis Baert, 'The Problem of Comparison in Comparative Regionalism', *Review of International Studies* 36:3 (2010), pp. 731-53; Leslie and Elijah, 'N = 2'; Alex Warleigh-Lack and Ben Rosamond, 'Across the EU Studies-New Regionalism Frontier: Invitation to a Dialogue', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48:4 (2010), pp. 990-1013.

<sup>22</sup> Ribeiro-Hoffmann, 'Inter- and transregionalism'.

<sup>23</sup> Baert et al., *Intersecting Interregionalism*.

<sup>24</sup> Hameiri 'Theorising Regions'.

<sup>25</sup> Acharya, 'Regionalism beyond EU-centrism'; Fredrik Söderbaum, 'Old, new, and comparative regionalism: the history and scholarly development of the field', in Börzel and Risse (eds), *Comparative Regionalism*, ch. 2 (online).



The CER-ASEAN case is both empirically and theoretically informative for the wider literature. Empirically, the CER-ASEAN case of inter-regionalism has largely been overlooked by the literature on both inter-regionalism and comparative regionalism. This is unfortunate, as it is one of the pathways by which experiences with regionalism have ‘diffused’ from Europe, to Australasia, and onwards to the Asia-Pacific.<sup>26</sup> Theoretically, the CER case is relevant because of both similarities to, and differences from, European experience.<sup>27</sup> The term CER (‘Closer Economic Relations’) originates in the 1983 ANZCERTA, but the latter is one of many institutions that govern the trans-Tasman relationship (which includes a trans-Tasman Single Economic Market [TTSEM] initiative).<sup>28</sup> Some bear similarities to European institutions, particularly those that are supranational, where sovereignty is ‘delegated’ to or ‘pooled’ in bodies that have regulatory authority in New Zealand and in Australian states and territories, but CER is not a formal regional organization (RO). Like those of other cases of economic regionalism, the architects of trans-Tasman integration chose an approach to overcoming the challenges of integrating national economies and confronting the demands of globalization that was suited to the social and political context in which these processes took place.<sup>29</sup> Also like policymakers in other regional projects—particularly the EU—they have sought to leverage their own experience in order to influence processes of regionalism beyond their immediate borders. Again like the EU, CER has been the more economically developed regional partner in its relationship with ASEAN. Yet Australia and New Zealand have acted through CER in limited instances. Although CER consists of two countries that share much in the way of history and social ties, this has not

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<sup>26</sup> Leslie ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design’; John Leslie and Annmarie Elijah, ‘From one single market to another: European integration, Australasian ambivalence and construction of the Trans-Tasman Single Economic Market’, in Annika Björkdahl, Natalia Chaban, John Leslie and Annick Masselot (eds), *Importing E.U. Norms: Conceptual Framework and Empirical Findings* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015), pp. 79-95.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Castle, Simon Le Quesne, and John Leslie, ‘Divergent Paths of State-Society Relations in European and trans-Tasman Economic Integration’, *Journal of European Integration* 38:1 (2016), pp. 41-59; Leslie and Elijah ‘N = 2’.

<sup>28</sup> Following source documents relied on for research, ‘CER’ denotes Australia and New Zealand acting in concert, even when this does not relate specifically to the 1983 ANZCERTA.

<sup>29</sup> Leslie ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design’; Leslie and Elijah ‘From one single market to another’.

made trans-Tasman integration, or the decision to act jointly in international politics, an obvious outcome. Integration has at times been politically contentious, and policymakers in Australasia have considered—and rejected—some forms of integration, such as a customs union and common currency. The fact that CER is a less important region (when compared to, for instance, the EU) has its advantages from a theoretical perspective: the inherent gravitational pull of large states and large regions may make it easier to overlook the relational qualities that contribute to their agency as well. By examining small regions that *lack* this gravitational pull, it is easier to observe. These similarities and differences allow us to better understand how to integrate observations from EU and non-EU cases. They allow us to see that certain factors that have contributed to the EU's success as a regional actor (notably, institutional capacity and recognition by other parties) were also relevant for Australia and New Zealand, but these factors were recast in a different context of action.

Because CER is not a formal regional organization, it is important to briefly address the potential concern that 'CER' did not have agency separate from the Australian and New Zealand governments. I define agency as the ability of a regional grouping to act in a coordinated way in international relations.<sup>30</sup> Yet 'regions', as subjects that can 'act' in the world, are social and political constructs.<sup>31</sup> They 'act' when their members authorise people (through treaty or otherwise) to act in their name. That relations between ten Southeast Asian countries and two South Pacific countries have been structured as CER-ASEAN relations by participants—even though doing so involves governments giving up some degree of independence to set policy vis-à-vis the other states involved—alerts us to the fact that these states view

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<sup>30</sup> Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff, and Jürgen Rüland, 'Interregionalism: a new phenomenon in international relations', in Hänggi et al. (eds), *Interregionalism*, p.6.

<sup>31</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Regionalism in Comparative Perspective', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 31:2 (1996), pp. 123–159.

‘CER’ (and ‘ASEAN’) as meaningful designations for groupings that can have relations between one another.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, even though CER is not an RO, the decentralised nature of trans-Tasman institutions is not unique. Even the EU “is... by no means a monolithic actor/unit, and it consists of many different actors and institutions—e.g. the Council, the Commission, the EP, the Court of Justice and the individual EU member states—that, although inter-connected, all have powers to engage in various types of interregional activities.”<sup>33</sup> Thus the ‘region’ may be constituted by its member states in engagement with third parties. Yet, I am not merely using ‘CER’, as shorthand for Australia and New Zealand. Trans-Tasman integration has led to the creation of supranational institutions in certain issue-areas, and actors from these institutions have participated directly in relations with ASEAN, notably in standards cooperation.<sup>34</sup> Finally, CER (viewed as integration process) had its own power of attraction for ASEAN officials seeking to consolidate integration in Southeast Asia. On a smaller scale, this recalls accounts of regional ‘presence’ as a constitutive element of ‘actorship’, as seen for instance in Hettne’s discussion of the EU: ‘Simply by existing... the Union has an impact on the rest of the world.’<sup>35</sup> With this in mind, the following section develops the theoretical framework.

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<sup>32</sup> CER-ASEAN ministerial meetings were a regular fixture from the mid-1990s, and although market access was negotiated bilaterally between individual countries for AANZFTA, negotiations also took place during ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-CER consultations: Michael Mugliston, ‘Negotiating the ASEAN-Australia–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement’, *Intergovernmental Relations Conference: A practical approach in a changing landscape* (21 July 2009), p.10. See also the report commissioned at a 1999 AEM-CER meeting on the feasibility of an inter-regional agreement, which discusses the motivations of ‘CER’ and ‘ASEAN’, referring to them as ‘regional groups’: High Level Task Force, The Angkor Agenda: report of the High Level Task Force on the AFTA-CER Free Trade Area (2000), <http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/aanzfta/angkor-agenda.pdf>, para.2.1.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Baert, Tiziana Scaramagli, and Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Introduction: intersecting interregionalism’, in Baert et al., *Intersecting Interregionalism*, p.4.

<sup>34</sup> ASEAN standards bodies and their CER counterparts met throughout the 1990s. For a fuller discussion, see Matthew Castle, ‘Forging an Australasian region: trans-Tasman integration and interregionalism in the Asia-Pacific’, MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington (2012), pp. 68-70.

<sup>35</sup> Hettne, ‘Actorship’: 59.

*Embedding regional agency in social and historical context*

Developed in the substantivist tradition of analysis associated with Karl Polanyi,<sup>36</sup> the concept of ‘embeddedness’ was reformulated by Mark Granovetter, who sought a middle ground between ‘over-socialised’ and ‘under-socialised’ accounts of market actors. Granovetter’s ‘neo-substantivist’ statement holds that economic actors are not strictly a product of social or institutional context, slavishly following internalised norms of behaviour that derive from their external environment (the ‘over-socialised’ account). Nor are they strictly utilitarian, seeking only to maximise their exogenously defined self-interest without regard to wider social context (the ‘under-socialised’ account). Granovetter’s corrective was to demonstrate that economic actors are instead embedded in ‘concrete ongoing systems of social relations’ that affect their behaviour, for instance by helping to establish trust or by discouraging actors from cheating one another.<sup>37</sup> These relations are ‘embedded’ in the sense that they are firmly established—they are repeated interactions overlaid with social content. This approach provides a more compelling account of agency than either over- or under-socialised depictions of actors, where actors cannot escape the dictates of (respectively) external context, or exogenously defined interests. Here, I argue that regions, as actors, are similarly ‘embedded’ in ongoing systems of social, political and historical relations in world politics, and that this embeddedness helps to explain regional agency. Explaining the action of regional groupings *without* reference to such wider context is, with apologies to Granovetter’s terminology, akin to an ‘under-socialised’ account of regional actors. The perspective outlined here makes explicit that agency is linked to processes of regionalism, and is therefore sensitive to the context in which regionalism takes place and to the motivations and political dynamics that underpin those processes. The perspective further implies that agency is affected by regional groupings’ relationships with specific third parties: it is an emergent property of these relations.

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York; Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1944).

<sup>37</sup> Granovetter ‘Embeddedness’, p. 487.

In what follows, I outline an embeddedness approach to understanding regional agency. In elaborating this framework, I explain how this approach differs from alternatives, and how the present approach contributes to advancing a comparative agenda that better integrates European and non-European insights.

It is helpful to start with an illustration of embeddedness. In his account of market actors, Granovetter explains that long-term relationships, and the embeddedness of relationships in communities, create standards of expected behaviour. One implication is that dense social ties (like those in an industry with many social links between representatives from different firms), reduce the pressures to create formal institutional mechanisms for enforcing the ‘incomplete contracts’ between market actors, such as ongoing relationships between contractors, or between suppliers. Over time, economic transactions become overlaid with social relations. This is the basis of Granovetter’s critique of Williamson’s ‘markets and hierarchies’ research programme.<sup>38</sup> I use Granovetter’s work on market actors as a starting point, but the link between social ties and formal institutions can be adapted to the context of regionalism and regional agency. Where social ties between actors at the regional or inter-regional level are dense, pressures to rely on formal institutions to manage interactions governed by uncertainty (i.e., the incomplete contracts inherent in international relations) are likely to be reduced. Accordingly, the social context in which regional actors are embedded helps to explain the puzzle motivating this article: that regional actors that lack the (institutional) attributes usually seen as prerequisites for agency are still able to engage third-parties. The following paragraphs develop this point.

Viewing regional actors as embedded draws attention to the ongoing political and social negotiations and contestations that define projects of regionalism, and to the changing motivations of those projects. This argument builds on the observation that processes associated with regional integration are ‘embedded’ in the sense that they and the actors that advance them are situated within, and have agency, power and

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<sup>38</sup> Granovetter ‘Embeddedness’, pp. 493-504; Oliver Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

limitations because of sets of social relationships and institutions that are particular to a given social and historical context.<sup>39</sup> By drawing attention to this context, observers can explain how goals shared between regional integration projects (for instance, creating a trans-national market) result in divergent outcomes. Thus, Leslie demonstrates that the architects of the TTSEM drew on European experience but adapted it to local context. Strikingly, Australasian policymakers found institutional solutions to the challenges of coordinating regulatory policy that reflected political preferences in Australia and New Zealand, but which also reflected mutual trust in the regulatory regimes of the two countries and in the different Australian States and Territories.<sup>40</sup>

An approach that places motivations for regionalism at the forefront of an explanation of regional agency recognises the contingency of those motivations, which may have ‘internal’ sources, such as reducing barriers to economic exchange, or ‘external’ sources, such as global economic pressures. External context may create incentives for regional action that responds to global change. For instance, regional integration can create competitive pressures and so can become ‘contagious’ due to fears of trade and investment diversion,<sup>41</sup> resulting in a ‘domino effect’ of regionalism.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, external context may also create disincentives for regionalism or regional agency. The global economic downturn since the 2008 financial crisis seems to have contributed to the rejection of international economic integration in some parts of the world, and the continued difficulties faced by the EU may reduce the appeal for other regions to seek further integration. Domestic political support for different policies also changes as ideas—

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<sup>39</sup> Leslie ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design’ pp. 207-208; ‘Sequencing, People Movements and Mass Politicization in European and trans-Tasman Single Markets, *Government and Opposition*, 51:2 (2016), pp. 294-326; Castle et al., ‘Divergent Paths of State-Society Relations’, p. 44; Hameiri, ‘Theorising Regions’.

<sup>40</sup> Leslie ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design’, pp. 201-202.

<sup>41</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Helen V. Milner, ‘The New Wave of Regionalism’, *International Organization* 53:3 (1999), pp. 589-627; Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Richard E. Baldwin, ‘The Causes of Regionalism’, *The World Economy* 20:7 (1997), pp. 865-88.

such as how the economy should best be governed—evolve and diffuse. As these sorts of ideas evolve, voters’ and governments’ understandings of the purpose or appeal of regional integration and regional action are also likely to shift.

This view builds on that of ‘New Regionalism’ scholars, who distinguished themselves from the ‘old regionalism’ with reference to the differences in global context in which more recent processes of regionalism have taken place;<sup>43</sup> New Regionalism approaches also underscore social and historical context to understand processes of regionalism.<sup>44</sup> Yet while these approaches emphasise wider shifts in the global economy to understand motivations for regionalism, such external context (particularly relational context) is often then less explicitly relied on to understand action itself. In other words, the general *why* of regional agency is analytically separated from the *how* in particular cases, removing a crucial explanation for agency. The present article builds on this work by maintaining an explicit emphasis on external context to understand how regional agency is possible.

Clearly, differing motivations for regional integration are likely to affect the form that agency takes. Where regional agency advances the goals that underpin regional integration, such as by equipping states to respond to external pressures, developing agency will appear a more natural extension of the regional project. This evokes Grieco’s ‘voice opportunity’ hypothesis,<sup>45</sup> which sees integration as a means of increasing the collective bargaining power of members.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the present approach is consistent with existing descriptions of the ‘functions’ of inter-regionalism associated with global governance,<sup>47</sup> to the

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<sup>43</sup> Söderbaum, ‘Old, new, and comparative regionalism’.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid; Hettne, ‘Actorship’; Hettne and Söderbaum ‘Rise of Regionness’.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph M. Grieco, ‘State Interests and Institutional Rule Trajectories: a Neorealist Interpretation of the Maastricht Treaty and European Economic and Monetary Union’, *Security Studies* 5:3 (1996), pp. 261–306.

<sup>46</sup> In the ASEAN context see Paruedee Nguitragool and Jürgen Rüland, *ASEAN as an Actor in International Fora: Reality, Potential and Constraints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> These are commonly identified as ‘balancing’; ‘institution building’; ‘rationalising’ of pre-defined issues’; ‘agenda-setting’ to advance cooperative goals at the multilateral level; and ‘collective identity formation’: Jürgen Rüland ‘Balancers, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builders? International

extent that performing these motivates some regions to develop agency. This suggests, as is well recognised, that regional agency differs based on issue-area, for instance due to different institutional capabilities,<sup>48</sup> or differing levels of preference convergence among member states.<sup>49</sup>

Yet it implies a far more dynamic understanding of regional agency than is commonly adopted. Consider recent efforts to assess and compare ‘levels’ of ‘actorness’. Both Hulse and Wunderlich have made important strides in advancing a genuinely comparative agenda for analysing regional actors, and have empirically documented regional agency beyond the EU.<sup>50</sup> In both instances, however, their approach assumes that regional groupings are endowed with a degree of agency that remains static, regardless of—for example—the partner with which a region may be attempting cooperation. Similarly, while Doidge argues that inter-regionalism can be used to build regional capacity, he takes as given the nature of the actors involved. An objective level of regional actorness is first established, and this determines the type of inter-regional dialogue that will be possible.<sup>51</sup> By way of contrast, an embeddedness approach to understanding agency examines actor and context simultaneously. As Hettne points out, actorness is ‘not only a simple function of regionness, but also an outcome of a dialectic process between endogenous and exogenous forces’.<sup>52</sup> To reiterate, such a dialectical relationship between actor and context emphasises the contingency of motivations for integration.

This tight relationship between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ also points to ways that groups or individuals may gain political power from regional agency. Regional integration is an ongoing process, and as with all

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Relations and the Study of Interregionalism’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 17:8 (2010), pp. 1271–83; Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid; Matthew Doidge, ‘Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism’, *Journal of European Integration* 29:2 (2007): pp. 229–248; Hettne, ‘Actorship’.

<sup>49</sup> Martijn L.P. Groenleer and Louise G. Van Schaik, ‘United we Stand? The European Union's International Actorness in the Cases of the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45:5 (2007), pp. 969–98.

<sup>50</sup> Hulse, ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union’; Wunderlich, ‘EU and ASEAN Actorness’.

<sup>51</sup> Doidge, ‘Joined at the Hip’, p. 234.

<sup>52</sup> Hettne, ‘Actorship’: 59. Hettne’s intriguing suggestion of a ‘dialectic’ is unfortunately not further developed.



processes of social change, it is contested. To the extent that developing regional agency creates pressures for further integration, regional agency is more likely to be favoured by social groups or policymakers who already have a strong interest in regional integration. Evidently, there is a normative dimension to regional agency if it serves to legitimate a regional project. As should be obvious, this suggests that interests opposed to regionalism are likely to seek to limit regional agency. As I return to, we observe these dynamics in both ASEAN and Australasia.

Examining actor and context simultaneously also correctly emphasises the ongoing nature of social relations between actors. While there is clearly a minimum level of regional capacity that is required for external action, external relationships play a crucial role. Such relationships may provide the motivation for agency in the first place, for instance if a relationship furthers the (economic, political, or other) goals of decision-makers within the region. Coordination of foreign policy requires national governments to accept some limits on their policy autonomy, but a history of regional engagement with a partner may lower the barriers to further joint action by making such action seem a more natural extension of precedent. Cooperation also depends on the interests of third-parties. Just as regional agency is more likely where it advances the goals of regional integration, cooperation is more likely with a partner for whom such cooperation advances their own goals.

In addition to shaping the motivations for regional agency, the identity of third parties also has implications for the sort of institutions that might be required for cooperation. As already noted, social ties reduce the need for formal institutions to govern ‘incomplete contracts’: where regional actors have a history of cooperation, pressure to rely on formal institutional mechanisms to manage further relationships (such as entering trade negotiations) may be weaker. Indeed, knowledge about third-parties (gained from past interactions) is likely to inform behaviour that will be most conducive to successful engagement. External factors are often used to explain agency in addition to objective regional characteristics like institutional design, but the relationship between external and regional characteristics is less frequently

examined. Yet it is in part *through* external relationships that regional characteristics gain their importance. Highly centralised, formalised or supranational institutions are likely to increase agency in many contexts. In other contexts—for instance when dealing with actors where informality is an important norm—such institutional characteristics may hinder cooperation if they prevent a more informal approach that would be better suited to cooperation with that partner. This is not to disregard the importance of regional attributes, only to emphasise that the embedded nature of regional actors makes the utility or appropriateness of such attributes somewhat contingent on relational context. Institutions contribute to agency when they are suited to regional context rather than when they fulfil some pre-determined benchmark,<sup>53</sup> but so too are institutions more likely to contribute to agency when they are suited to external relationships.

This social dimension of regional agency is suggested by insights that external elements like ‘presence’, ‘recognition’, and ‘identity’ are important factors in regional agency.<sup>54</sup> It has been proposed that regional agency is affected by such factors as bargaining asymmetries,<sup>55</sup> RO membership in forums such as the United Nations (UN) or the World Trade Organization (WTO),<sup>56</sup> or the type of institutional setting in which a regional actor operates.<sup>57</sup> These factors undoubtedly enable regional agency, but they fall short of accounting for *specific* relationships among actors and the role that such relationships play in giving meaning to regional attributes.

In sum, just as Granovetter rejected the view of market actors as atomistic and instead proposed they are embedded in networks of social relations, I argue that regional actors are embedded in networks of

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<sup>53</sup> Hulse, ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union’, p. 551.

<sup>54</sup> Allen and Smith, ‘Western Europe's Presence’; Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (London: Routledge, 2006. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition); Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*, p. 24; Hulse ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union’.

<sup>55</sup> Eugénia da Conceição-Heldt and Sophie Meunier, ‘Speaking with a Single Voice: Internal Cohesiveness and External Effectiveness of the EU in Global Governance’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 21:7 (2014), pp. 971-75.

<sup>56</sup> Hulse ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union’, p. 552.

<sup>57</sup> Oriol Costa and Knud Erik Jørgensen (eds), *The Influence of International Institutions on the EU: When Multilateralism Hits Brussels* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

social, political and historical relationships in world politics. While regional attributes affect agency, these should be seen in the context of 1) idiosyncratic processes of regionalism and 2) specific relationships in world politics.

#### *Analytical approach*

An embeddedness approach to understanding regional agency rests on two pillars, both of which have testable implications. Drawing from the first pillar (agency should be understood with reference to the contingent goals of regionalism), we can formulate a first hypothesis: *the more regional agency will advance the goals of regional integration, the more it will be pursued* (H1). This approach is distinct from those that primarily emphasise the relative institutionalisation and size of regional groupings. Observing that states' decisions to coordinate as a regional grouping vary as a function of the (changing) goals of their regional project would support this hypothesis. If on the other hand the decision to coordinate as a regional grouping is relatively stable despite changing motivations for regionalism, this would tend to disprove the first hypothesis.

Two hypotheses can be drawn from the second pillar of an embeddedness approach (agency is an emergent property of specific relationships). First, regional groupings are not equally likely to cooperate with all partners, even where the issue-area at play is similar: *States' decisions to (not to) coordinate as a regional grouping will be informed by characteristics of the third-party in question that can help (do not help) to advance regional goals* (H2).<sup>58</sup> This contrasts with approaches that expect agency to differ based on issue-area, but not necessarily based on partner. A further hypothesis pertains to regional institutions. It is here that an embeddedness approach leads to the greatest difference in expectations, compared to alternative frameworks. The approach here expects that *regional agency will be improved by the*

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<sup>58</sup> Obviously there is some overlap between the two pillars of an embeddedness approach, although the separation is analytically useful.

*appropriateness of regional institutions to cooperation with particular partners* (H3). This is not to discount the obvious fact that a minimum level of regional institutional capacity is required, nor that greater (often, supranational) institutional capacity may indeed better enable regional groupings to take and act on decisions.<sup>59</sup> Yet this third hypothesis captures the idea that the compatibility between the institutions of different regions will also enable them to act purposively in a relationship with one another.

To test these hypotheses, the next section presents empirical evidence from the CER-ASEAN case. I use process-tracing, a method suited to generating new theory through the study of outlier cases.<sup>60</sup> As an example of regional agency that satisfies few of the usual criteria, the CER-ASEAN case is a clear outlier. I use evidence from two time periods: the 1970s; and the 1990s onwards, following implementation of ANZCERTA (1983) and its significant deepening in a 1988 review. This allows me to examine how shifts in the international economic environment, and the changing goals of regionalism in Australasia, affected regional agency vis-à-vis ASEAN.

### **Regional agency in Australasia**

This section illustrates the two aspects of the embeddedness argument. Trans-Tasman regional agency vis-à-vis ASEAN was possible in part because it furthered goals of the trans-Tasman regional integration project. Regional agency was also an emergent property of the relationship with ASEAN. Using archival evidence and interviews, I trace Australia and New Zealand's relations with ASEAN in two time periods—the 1970s, when the two countries largely engaged ASEAN separately (albeit with informal coordination), and the 1990s onwards, when Australia and New Zealand coordinated as CER in an inter-regional dialogue

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<sup>59</sup> Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 20.

between CER and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Reconceptualization of Australasian regionalism changed how Australasian policymakers perceived joint engagement with ASEAN, and changes within ASEAN encouraged recognition of CER. Thus, Australia and New Zealand's use of CER for joint engagement with ASEAN reflects the shared goals of participating in and shaping processes of Asian-Pacific economic integration. Moreover, ASEAN encouragement to use CER as a vehicle for inter-regional relations can be seen in the context of consolidating ASEAN economic integration. Finally, even though the trans-Tasman institutions used to manage integration processes were informal and decentralised—attributes usually considered a limiting factor for regional agency—they were appropriate for a relationship with ASEAN in part because they mirrored ASEAN's own approach to integration.

*Australasian goals: open regionalism in the Asia-Pacific*

This section uses evidence from different time periods to demonstrate how changing goals of Australia-New Zealand economic integration induced a changing approach to formal Australia-New Zealand cooperation with ASEAN. In the 1970s Australia and New Zealand coordinated their policies with ASEAN, but this remained informal. The evidence suggests that (Australian) unwillingness (especially on Australia's part) for cooperation on ASEAN to lead to further integration under the existing New Zealand-Australian FTA (NAFTA) seemed to limit formal coordination at that time. By the 1990s, trans-Tasman integration had been reconceived as a policy that was complementary to the wider reformist objectives of both countries. CER-ASEAN relations reinforced what had become a key goal of trans-Tasman integration: participating in, and influencing, processes of Asian-Pacific regionalism.

Trans-Tasman cooperation on ASEAN dates to the 1970s, when both countries became ASEAN Dialogue Partners. On the subject of a meeting planned for February 1974 between Australian officials and ASEAN Secretaries-General to discuss the former's involvement in ASEAN's development projects, one New Zealand report noted that 'even if we are both to develop our co-operation with ASEAN through

separate consultations of this type, we would still see co-ordination advantages in attending each other's meetings'.<sup>61</sup> Once New Zealand became an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in February 1975 (the year after Australia), technical cooperation in various issue areas was the subject of regular trans-Tasman coordination.<sup>62</sup> This not only consisted of the smaller trans-Tasman partner seeking 'coordination advantages' from cooperation, but of two-way information sharing. During one exchange between Wellington and Canberra, for instance, the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra notes, 'DFA [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs] expects to be ready for a meeting with senior ASEAN officials to review the relationship by about May, and would be most interested in how our JTS [Joint Trade Study] Group goes'.<sup>63</sup>

Some officials in New Zealand were interested in formalizing a joint Australia-New Zealand approach, but there was concern that this position might not be shared by Australia, and that there would be 'a danger that such a view will seem as simply another way of telling Australia it ought to expand [the Australasian] NAFTA'.<sup>64</sup> Yet, 'developing Australia-New Zealand co-operation over ASEAN [was seen as] of major significance, even to direct A-NZ bilateral relations'.<sup>65</sup> Such communications indicate the tight conceptual relationship between regionalism and inter-regionalism for trans-Tasman policymakers: increasing cooperation with a third party was linked to increasing regional integration. That this did not eventuate seems to reflect a lack of institutional capacity under the existing (Australasian) NAFTA as well as unwillingness on the part of Australia—the larger and more powerful partner in the trans-Tasman

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<sup>61</sup> New Zealand MFA, Internal Telegram from Wellington to Singapore, File no. 1301 (24 December 1973), para.2.

<sup>62</sup> Animal husbandry, dental health, forestry, the end-uses of ASEAN timber in New Zealand, and trade expansion.

<sup>63</sup> New Zealand MFA 'ASEAN/New Zealand Joint Trade Study Group', Internal Telegram from Canberra to Wellington, File no: 302 (22 February 1977).

<sup>64</sup> New Zealand MFA, Confidential Internal Fax from Canberra to Wellington, File no. 2222 (26 September 1978), para. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

relationship. Although a trans-Tasman regional integration project existed in the form of the NAFTA, this project had become mired in the triviality of exchanging tariff concessions on individual line items.<sup>66</sup> It was increasingly seen as unfit for enabling Australasian cooperation to respond to a new phase of global trade integration.<sup>67</sup>

By the 1980s and early 1990s, a policy shift had taken hold on both sides of the Tasman. Policymakers pursued integration with ANZCERTA in 1983 and significantly expanded the agreement in a 1988 review to include services, business law, technical barriers to trade, quarantine procedures, among other areas. Differing perspectives of trans-Tasman integration persisted on both sides of the Tasman. For export-dependent agricultural New Zealand, the imperative of re-orientating the economy towards economic relations with Asian-Pacific partners followed a period of significant dependence on the UK export market. For Canberra, though the ‘tyranny of distance’<sup>68</sup> continued to make itself felt in economic insecurity and the need to orient the economy towards Asia, Australia had for a longer time than New Zealand traded with a greater range of partners. Trans-Tasman integration would become more intimately related to processes of domestic micro-economic and governance reform.<sup>69</sup> Yet, the turbulence of the 1970s and the pronouncement in 1979 at the highest Australian levels that the two countries must ‘hold hands’<sup>70</sup> to avoid economic difficulty suggests that the CER agenda acknowledged the converging destiny of two countries after periods during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which differences rather than similarities between one another had

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<sup>66</sup> Alan Bollard and David Mayes, ‘Regionalism and the Pacific Rim’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 30:2 (1992), pp. 195-210.

<sup>67</sup> Philippa Mein Smith, ‘Did Muldoon Really “Go Too Slowly” with CER?’, *New Zealand Journal of History* 41:2 (2007), pp. 161-79.

<sup>68</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia’s History* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1966).

<sup>69</sup> Castle et al., ‘Divergent Paths of State-Society Relations’, p. 51; Leslie and Elijah, ‘From one single market to another’, pp. 83-84.

<sup>70</sup> Mein Smith ‘CER’, p. 167.

been emphasised.<sup>71</sup> This shared sense of purpose made trans-Tasman integration one component in a multifaceted approach to liberalization that included institutionalizing an ‘open’ model of economic integration in the wider Asia-Pacific.<sup>72</sup> In support of the first hypothesis outlined above, as the motivations underpinning the Australasian regional integration project evolved, so too did the possibilities for regional agency.

One finds evidence of this in ASEAN and CER Ministers’ commitment to ‘open regionalism’ in the ministerial statement from the first ASEAN-CER Ministerial Meeting.<sup>73</sup> Australia and New Zealand’s ambitions are also evident in archived communications between CER policymakers regarding the goals of the relationship. While a CER-ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on standards was underway, an AFTA-CER Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) took place on 4 June 1996 in Kuala Lumpur to review four short-term goals of a first meeting held in 1995. New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) notes of the evolving relationship, ‘As DFAT [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade] pointed out to us privately, an umbrella MOU on AFTA/CER co-operation might have the unintended disadvantage of limiting the dialogue if it confined it to facilitation initiatives only – a valid point)’.<sup>74</sup>

The desire to shape regional developments and contribute to a liberal regional trading environment is particularly evident in the AANZFTA process. Australia’s chief negotiator on the AANZFTA framed the

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<sup>71</sup> Philippa Mein Smith and Peter Hempenstall, ‘Rediscovering the trans-Tasman world’, in Philippa Mein Smith, Peter Hempenstall and Shaun Goldfinch (eds), *Remaking the Tasman World* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 2008), pp. 13-30.

<sup>72</sup> Leslie, ‘Regionalism by Diffusion and Design’; Anthony L. Smith ‘The AFTA-CER Dialogue: A New Zealand Perspective on an Emerging Trade Area Linkage’, *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* 14:3 (1998), pp. 238–52.

<sup>73</sup> ASEAN and CER Ministers, ‘Joint Press Statement on Informal Consultations between AEM and the Ministers from the CER Countries’ (1995), available at <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community/item/informal-consultations-between-aem-and-the-ministers-from-the-cer-countries-9-september-1995-brunei-darussalam>, accessed December 2011.

<sup>74</sup> New Zealand MFAT, ‘AFTA/CER: SOM’, Fax from Wellington to ASEAN Posts, File no:104/434/14 (7 June, 1996), para. 9.



agreement explicitly in the context of exclusion from previous Asian-Pacific regional initiatives: ‘we [Australia and New Zealand] were not part of the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) Chiang Mai Initiative. And basically I’ve always had that in my mind as I’ve worked with ASEAN on AANZFTA’.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere, a report prepared for the Australian DFAT suggested that an AFTA-CER FTA should be seen as a stepping stone to wider liberalization through the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) process and the WTO.<sup>76</sup> Noting that one of the outcomes of CER reported by the New Zealand government has been to use the ‘positive experience of CER to gradually reduce protection on imports from the rest of the world’,<sup>77</sup> the authors suggest that while ‘AFTA-CER would be a small trade grouping by world standards, the positive experience may well encourage members to unilaterally extend the removal of trade barriers to other countries on an MFN basis’.<sup>78</sup>

In other words, the sentiment expressed by one New Zealand Ministry official, that ‘New Zealand and Australia both have bigger fish to fry than each other’,<sup>79</sup> was a motivation to use CER in relations with ASEAN. CER-ASEAN relations reinforced the goals of using the CER experience to influence the process of trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, ambitions that had underpinned trans-Tasman integration since conception of CER. This assertion is supported by the continuing ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum (IPF), which is clearly considered by Australia and New Zealand as an opportunity to shape integration beyond the immediate region.<sup>80</sup> As New Zealand’s MFAT notes, ‘The IPF provides an opportunity for the CER partners to share with ASEAN countries the lessons learned from nearly thirty years of the CER/Single Economic Market (SEM) journey, and to consider how those insights

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Michael Mugliston, December 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Lee Davis, Warwick McKibbin, and Andrew Stoeckel, ‘Economic benefits from an AFTA-CER free trade area: year 2000 study’, *Report prepared for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, (Canberra and Sydney: Centre for International Economics., 2000).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with author, November 2011.

<sup>80</sup> The most recent seminar (in Melbourne on 15 March 2016) was the fifth.

might be useful for ASEAN in its ongoing process of regional economic integration'.<sup>81</sup> Similar is the Ministerial pronouncement, following the launch of the TTSEM project in 2004, that 'the two countries should seek to strengthen joint capability to influence international policy design'.<sup>82</sup>

The shift from informal trans-Tasman coordination on ASEAN during the 1970s to formal CER-ASEAN inter-regionalism in the 1990s and subsequently demonstrates the embedded nature of regional actors. In the 1970s, the ambivalence of the more powerful regional actor (Australia) about trans-Tasman integration seems to have placed certain limits on formal Australia-New Zealand coordination with ASEAN. As perspectives on trans-Tasman integration shifted with the 1983 creation of CER and its deepening in 1988, joint engagement with ASEAN was viewed much more positively. Australasian regional agency reflects the contingency of the trans-Tasman regional project and its role in responding to a changing international environment. In particular, CER-ASEAN relations provided Australian and New Zealand policymakers with an opportunity to influence the process of trade liberalization beyond their immediate region—an ambition implicit in their own regional project since at least the late 1970s,<sup>83</sup> and which became central following the 1988 review of ANZCERTA.<sup>84</sup> CER as a regional actor vis-à-vis ASEAN must be understood in the broader context of this reconsideration by Australia and New Zealand of their wider neighbourhood and the role that their own experience might play in shaping it to their advantage.

*The importance of partners: CER from outside-in*

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<sup>81</sup> MFAT 'Integration Partnership Forum'.

<sup>82</sup> Simon Power, 'Remaking the trans-Tasman world', Speech to the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (13 October 2009), available at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/remaking-trans-tasman-world>, accessed December 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Mein Smith 'CER'.

<sup>84</sup> Leslie, 'Regionalism by Diffusion and Design', pp. 204-207.

The use of CER for relations with ASEAN demonstrates the evolution of motivations for trans-Tasman economic integration: the lure of influencing Asian-Pacific regionalism made CER as a regional actor consistent with broader policy objectives of successive Australian and New Zealand governments. Yet, as this section demonstrates, it was Southeast Asian politicians who initiated cooperation between the two regional groupings. Greater interaction between ASEAN and CER reflects the context of ongoing integration projects in *both* regions. ASEAN's recognition of CER as a likely partner buttressed a redefinition of the Southeast Asian regional project that included changes in the domestic support base of governments in different Southeast Asian countries. CER's agency reflected not only the context of Australasian economic integration, but also that of similar processes in Southeast Asia. In further support of the embeddedness approach, CER's agency was due in part to the recognition by its partner, for whom inter-regional cooperation was also of strategic importance.

The economically liberal reforms of Southeast Asian governments in the late 1980s and 1990s imbued regional integration in that period with an internationalist outlook. From economic nationalism, liberal reformism became the dominant policy position, and ASEAN cooperation was enabled by leaders' domestic mobilization of 'internationalizing coalitions' favouring market openness, attracting capital, and technological transformation.<sup>85</sup> The launch of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) initiative was spurred by domestic transformation in the four largest ASEAN economies of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand,<sup>86</sup> a shift that paralleled Australia and New Zealand's own turn towards neoliberal ideology through the 1980s. AFTA's focus, like that of CER, was outward-looking from inception; intra-regional

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<sup>85</sup> Etel Solingen, 'ASEAN, "Quo Vadis"? Domestic Coalitions and Regional Co-operation', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21:1 (1999), pp. 30-53; Etel Solingen 'The Genesis, Design and Effects of Regional Institutions: Lessons from East Asia and the Middle East', *International Studies Quarterly* 52:2 (2008), pp. 261-294.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Stubbs, 'Signing on to Liberalization: AFTA and the Politics of Regional Economic Cooperation', *The Pacific Review* 13:2 (2000), pp. 297-318; Alfredo C. Robles, 'The ASEAN Free Trade Area and the Construction of a Southeast Asian Economic Community in East Asia', *Asian Journal of Political Science* 12:2 (2004), pp. 78-108.

economic complementarities, relatively low in Australasia,<sup>87</sup> were lower still in Southeast Asia. Moreover, both regional integration projects were reactions to regionalism elsewhere—trans-Tasman integration responded to the UK accession to the EEC, and AFTA responded to the next generation of major regional integration—(American) NAFTA and the Single European Market (SEM) programme.<sup>88</sup>

Recognizing CER as a potential regional partner went hand-in-hand with these transformations in Southeast Asia. Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun had championed AFTA through 1991 and oversaw its announcement in January 1992.<sup>89</sup> Less than a year after the launch of the AFTA process in January 1993, another senior Thai official (from a different administration), Deputy Prime Minister Supachai Panitchpakdi, proposed the AFTA-CER linkage in November of 1993 at the (Australian) National Trade and Investment Outlook Conference held in Melbourne on 24-26 November 1993. Supported by a report by DFAT's East Asian Analytical Unit,<sup>90</sup> (1994) and promoted by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating,<sup>91</sup> Supachai's proposal led in September 1995 to informal consultations between ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and CER Trade Ministers.<sup>92</sup>

ASEAN member states' efforts to implement the AFTA amid a sometimes-uncertain political climate,<sup>93</sup> and their moves to consolidate the shift to liberal economic policy,<sup>94</sup> is suggested by the CER-AFTA agenda. The initial meeting focused on technical areas of cooperation that would be of assistance to ASEAN officials contemplating AFTA's implementation. Specific goals included creation of an AFTA-CER Customs Compendium; the linkage of Trade and Investment Databases; exchange of Information on

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<sup>87</sup> Castle et al., 'Divergent Paths of State-Society Relations'.

<sup>88</sup> Robles, 'The ASEAN Free Trade Area'.

<sup>89</sup> Stubbs, 'Signing on to Liberalization'.

<sup>90</sup> East Asian Analytical Unit, *ASEAN Free Trade Area: Trading Bloc or Building Bloc?* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1994).

<sup>91</sup> Smith, 'AFTA-CER', p. 238.

<sup>92</sup> AEM-CER Ministerial Meetings have continued annually—2015 saw the 20<sup>th</sup> AEM-CER Consultations held in Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>93</sup> Stubbs, 'Signing on to Liberalization'.

<sup>94</sup> Solingen, 'Regional Institutions'.

Standards and Conformance and collaborative work on ISO 14000 Environmental Certifications; and information promotion on standards by featuring developments in CER standards and conformance in the ASEAN standards and Quality Bulletin.<sup>95</sup> The meeting's emphasis on trade and investment promotion also suggests Robles' argument that AFTA has been motivated by the desire to increase investment into ASEAN countries.<sup>96</sup> The ASEAN Secretariat's own précis on the CER-ASEAN relationship underscores this point, noting the desirability of greater investment into ASEAN countries from Australasia.<sup>97</sup>

It is worth being explicit about the normative dimensions to regional agency. The CER-ASEAN relationship supported the rising political power of internationalist/neo-liberal interests within CER and ASEAN countries. In particular, establishing inter-regional links with CER advanced the internationalist interests in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s. The social changes represented by regional integration in Southeast Asia and Australasia during the 1980s, the 1990s and beyond were legitimated by the recognition of other regional projects—and by the ongoing promotion of the CER 'model' in the CER-ASEAN Integration Partnership Forum.

In summary, and in support of the second hypothesis outlined above, the specific characteristics of both CER and ASEAN motivated the recognition of one another as suitable partners in an inter-regional relationship. CER-ASEAN relations were consistent with the demands of a domestic coalition in Southeast Asian states seeking to reinforce a nascent program of liberal market reforms and regional economic integration. As already detailed, involvement in processes of Asian-Pacific regionalism motivated Australia and New Zealand to act jointly as CER. Evidently, CER was also attractive to ASEAN as the latter sought to implement the AFTA. Without an ASEAN member state's suggestion, it is possible that Australia and New Zealand would never have acted jointly as CER. In other words, CER's agency should be understood

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<sup>95</sup> New Zealand MFAT, 'AFTA/CER: update' Internal MFAT Communication, File no. 104/434/14 (n.d., 1995), para.6

<sup>96</sup> Robles, 'The ASEAN Free Trade Area'.

<sup>97</sup> ASEAN Secretariat 'The AFTA-CER linkage', available at <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community/item/the-afta-cer-linkage>, accessed May 2015.

from the perspective not only of Australasian social and historical context, but also from the perspective of the wider regional context of the Asia-Pacific. Processes of regional integration beyond Australasia were not just attractive to Australia and New Zealand, they motivated other actors to recognise Australia and New Zealand as CER.

*Agency as an emergent property of social relations*

The previous sections demonstrate how ASEAN's identity as an important regional actor in the Asia-Pacific motivated trans-Tasman agency, and how CER's identity as a developed, capital-exporting region in turn motivated recognition by ASEAN. This section focuses on the performative aspect of this relationship, and specifically on how CER's informal institutions, rather than impeding relations with ASEAN, proved appropriate. Trans-Tasman integration, like that in Europe, goes 'deep' behind borders, but Australia and New Zealand have avoided centralised supranational institutions.<sup>98</sup> Should a lack of centralised, supranational institutions impede regional agency, as is sometimes asserted?<sup>99</sup> Regions with alternative institutional design can be effective regional actors,<sup>100</sup> but such cases deviate from a perceived norm. Viewing regional actors as embedded allows us to explain such cases: a region's agency can be seen as an emergent property of the relationships in which it is embedded. Thus, even if the informal and decentralised institutions used to govern trans-Tasman regionalism would prove inappropriate for action in some contexts and with some partners, they were suited to cooperation with ASEAN. This appears to reflect not only similar preferences for less formal regional institutions, but also an established history of repeated interactions between Southeast Asian and Australasian officials and policymakers. This provides evidence in support of the third hypothesis outlined above.

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<sup>98</sup> Bollard and Mayes, 'Regionalism', p. 199; Leslie and Elijah 'N = 2'.

<sup>99</sup> Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*, pp. 23-24; Wunderlich, 'EU and ASEAN Actorness', p. 664.

<sup>100</sup> Adelman, 'Beyond aid and trade'; Hulse 'Actorness Beyond the European Union'.

Trans-Tasman regional institutions reflect political preferences and the dynamics of the trans-Tasman relationship during the development of CER. During a 1988 Review of ANZCERTA, it was decided (by Australia) to maintain institutional arrangements for integration that were disaggregated rather than centralised under a 'single instrument' as was New Zealand's preference.<sup>101</sup> Instead, existing Australian federal institutions were extended to trans-Tasman economic governance, or new issue-specific institutions were created. Reform of Australia's federal structures launched with Prime Minister Bob Hawke's 'New Federalism' led to the 1992 creation of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), a federal institution that houses Ministerial Councils that are mandated to deal with regulatory issues. In many of these bodies New Zealand has become a full member with voting rights, particularly for issues concerning the 1998 Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA).<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere, supranational bodies were created to govern trans-Tasman economic integration in specific issue areas such as standards accreditation (the 1991 Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand—JAS-ANZ), or food safety (Food Standards Australia New Zealand—FSANZ). Thus, trans-Tasman integration is governed by a patchwork of institutions organised on an issue-specific basis to deal with the demands of an ambitious integration project that now includes a Trans-Tasman Single Economic Market (TTSEM) initiative.

Institutional capacity is clearly important to regional agency, and contributed to CER's agency in relations with ASEAN. In contrast to the prevailing wisdom however, a *lack* of overt formality or institutionalization appeared at times to facilitate rather than hinder the CER-ASEAN relationship. This is evident in Australasian acquiescence to ASEAN's informality and pace of activities. ASEAN officials took the lead in initiating meetings, such as those held annually following a first meeting on 17 January 1996 between the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) and their CER

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<sup>101</sup> Steve Hoadley, *New Zealand and Australia: Negotiating Closer Economic Relations* (Wellington: NZIIA, 1995), ch. 5; Leslie, 'Regionalism by Diffusion and Design', p. 203.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

counterparts.<sup>103</sup> When trade liberalization was raised informally by the Malaysian delegation at a Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) in 1996, Australia and New Zealand understood that things needed to move slowly; a proposal at that point for a ‘liberalisation agenda by the CER countries could be counterproductive – and risk drawing a firm negative reaction from some of the key ASEANs’.<sup>104</sup> Instead what was required was ‘further preparatory work, including research work and broadening the constituency for AFTA/CER linkages through the involvement of the business sector... and desirably, the idea [for a liberalisation agenda] should emerge first from the ASEAN side’.<sup>105</sup> Australia and New Zealand allowed the relationship with ASEAN to develop pragmatically as a function of the demands of cooperation—an approach informed by decades of prior relations, and consistent with the process of their own integration and with ASEAN’s norms of cooperation.

Far from ‘informal institutionalization set[ting] clear limits to regional actorness’,<sup>106</sup> informal trans-Tasman institutionalization may have *increased* CER’s agency vis-à-vis ASEAN. The continuation of the IPF suggests ASEAN’s attraction to the informal CER model of integration. Similarly, individuals involved in governing trans-Tasman integration promoted aspects of ASEAN’s institutional structure. Standard New Zealand’s Peter Davenport, for instance, favoured the creation of ‘formal Standards and Conformance infrastructure comparable with ASEAN’s ACCSQ’.<sup>107</sup> In his mind such symmetry would better ‘enable progress to be made’ with ASEAN, including ‘promot[ing] the adoption of internationally based Standards along the Joint AS/NZS model’.<sup>108</sup> In the event, the proposal did not go ahead, perhaps because such an institution would have been antithetical to the decentralised approach characteristic of trans-Tasman

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<sup>103</sup> The ACCSQ consists of the Chief Executives of the respective standard setting bodies of the ASEAN countries.

<sup>104</sup> MFAT, ‘AFTA/CER: SOM’, para. 18.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Wunderlich, ‘EU and ASEAN Actorness’, p. 664.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Davenport, ‘AFTA/CER: ACCSQ-CER meeting, Brunei 17/1/96’, Fax from Standards NZ to Graham Boxall (Ministry of Commerce), NZ archives file no. 101/14 (29 February 1996).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.



integration. Davenport's proposal suggests, however, that institutional *compatibility* may have been more important than institutional *formality* in enabling successful cooperation between the two regions.

Indeed, one sees in the CER-ASEAN relationship echoes of the 'ASEAN-way' of negotiating,<sup>109</sup> with an emphasis placed on informality and permissive consensus-seeking. Effective inter-regional cooperation may reflect similar approaches to institutional design and similar philosophies about regionalism. CER and ASEAN/AFTA avoided creating centralised institutions and proceeded with relative informality—and in divergence from previous modes of regional economic cooperation. Like the (Antipodean) NAFTA, the ASEAN Preferential Trading Arrangement (PTA) prior to AFTA had cooperated under a 'positive list' mechanism where trade was liberalised only on specific (often untraded) goods.<sup>110</sup>

Like in the European case, trans-Tasman institutions provided a framework for officials to extend regional cooperation inter-regionally. Unlike in the European case, institutional capacity did not stem from centralised institutions with broad competence, but from decentralised institutions with issue-specific competences. If we were to understand agency as a function primarily of regional attributes, we would expect informal institutions to limit regional agency. An embedded perspective suggests by contrast that institutions that are *compatible* with a third-party can contribute to agency, even where these are informal. This is likely to be particularly so where there is already a history of relations between regional actors.

### **Addressing alternative explanations**

Thus far, I have argued that CER's agency vis-à-vis ASEAN reflects the embeddedness of CER as a regional actor in the social, political and historical context of the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific, and in emerging networks of trade relations that included ties with ASEAN. I have argued that this context, considered in conjunction with the evolving motivations for trans-Tasman regional integration, explain *why*

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<sup>109</sup> Amitav Acharya, 'Ideas, Identity, and Institution-Building: From the "ASEAN Way" to the "Asia-Pacific Way"?' *The Pacific Review* 10:3 (1997), pp. 319-346.

<sup>110</sup> Robles, 'The ASEAN Free Trade Area', p. 92.

Australia and New Zealand chose to formally act as CER in inter-regional relations with ASEAN (but not with other partners), *when* they would choose to do so, and *how* such relations were successful. It is, however, important to address alternative explanations for CER's agency vis-à-vis ASEAN.

It might firstly be argued that the use of CER in such limited context reflects a lack of institutionalised regional capacity for coordinating foreign policies, rather than the embeddedness of CER as a regional actor: influential frameworks for regional 'actorness' invariably point to the importance of institutions.<sup>111</sup> Undoubtedly, there is truth to this. Australia and New Zealand have adopted an approach to economic integration that eschews more formal political mechanisms, and have sought to avoid overtly political integration. This goes some way to explaining why CER is not regularly used for third-party relations. Such an approach is dissatisfying however. If CER lacks the institutional capacity for agency, we are left explaining CER-ASEAN relations in an ad-hoc manner. Linking motivations to context using an embeddedness approach is more satisfying because it provides a theoretical framework that explains the CER-ASEAN relationship as well as the pattern of institutionalisation within CER. Both reflect Australasian policymakers' concern to promote 'open regionalism' in the Asia-Pacific, and to use trans-Tasman integration as a first step in re-orienting to the Asia-Pacific.

CER's agency also does not seem to be simply a function of the issue-area of trade. Australia and New Zealand have not chosen to cooperate on other trade agreements, even those negotiated around the same time as the AANZFTA (for example with China). Even with the EU, which actively promotes regionalism in other places to advance its interests,<sup>112</sup> the two countries are pursuing separate trade negotiations. Coordination with ASEAN was a function of that specific relationship. As a New Zealand official explained, 'we haven't gone down the joint approach with the big players. ASEAN was different because

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<sup>111</sup> Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*; 2014; Hettne 'Actorness'; Hulse 'Actorness Beyond the European Union'.

<sup>112</sup> David Camroux, 'Interregionalism or Merely a Fourth-Level Game? An examination of the EU-ASEAN Relationship', *East Asia* 27:1 (2010): pp. 57-77.

of the history that we've had... We don't have that kind of history in terms of talking with those other players about Free Trade or engagement.'<sup>113</sup> Only in one other case—in relations with Mercosur, another Pacific-rim trade agreement—has CER been used for region-to-region relations. Even in that case, cooperation has been limited to a dialogue mechanism, with no concrete outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

For more than two decades, Australia and New Zealand used CER to engage with ASEAN, despite CER's lack of qualities usually identified as important for regional agency. This article explains this puzzle through reference to the context in which regions act. Trans-Tasman regional agency vis-à-vis ASEAN was possible in part because it furthered goals of the trans-Tasman regional integration project. Reorienting the Australasian economies towards the Asia-Pacific motivated trans-Tasman integration since the 1980s. CER's agency vis-à-vis ASEAN reflects these aspirations. In the 1990s, ASEAN's own processes of economic integration provided incentives to recognise CER—a potential source of investment and trade—as a regional actor, in part to consolidate Southeast Asian economic integration. Finally, the issue-specific, decentralised regional institutions used to govern trans-Tasman integration were appropriate for the relationship with ASEAN, where regional cooperation favoured informality. Approaches to understanding regional agency that are based primarily on quantifiable regional characteristics would likely overlook the role of such specific relationships. Embedding CER as a regional actor in the social and historical context of Asian-Pacific regionalism in the early 1990-2000s and in the specific relationship with ASEAN overcomes this problem by linking regional characteristics to external context. This does not ignore regional attributes, rather it makes clear that these contribute to agency through their suitability to the context of action.

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<sup>113</sup> David Taylor, Telephone interview by author (Wellington, 7 October 2011).

The approach taken here helps to advance a comparative research agenda that since Hänggi and his co-authors documented the diversity of inter-regionalism,<sup>114</sup> has increasingly sought to reconcile the empirical importance of the EU and the need to integrate non-European cases. Non-European cases of inter-regionalism have been well demonstrated,<sup>115</sup> and the EU has been placed in comparative perspective.<sup>116</sup> Yet the EU continues to dominate theory-building. The contributors to a volume on the state of the art in inter-regionalism acknowledge this point, calling for efforts to overcome Eurocentrism, for empirical studies from outside of the North American, European and East Asian ‘triad’, and for novel theory-driven comparative work.<sup>117</sup> Elsewhere, Acharya recently called attention to the ‘tendency to judge other regionalisms in terms of a benchmark that draws heavily from the EU’s institutions and processes, while ignoring other possible approaches to regionalism and refusing to view their performance in terms of the goals set by themselves’.<sup>118</sup> Viewing regional actors as embedded enables us to overcome the temptation of developing such ‘benchmarks’ without disregarding the importance of regional attributes. An embeddedness approach *affirms* the importance of regional attributes: institutional capacity, presence, and regional cohesion were important factors in CER’s agency. Yet these attributes manifested differently from in the European case, and were activated in a particular external context: CER’s attributes contributed to agency because they were relevant to the relationship with ASEAN. Historical and relational context shape the suitability of regional attributes for agency. Theories of social embeddedness provides the theoretical framework to make this link between regional attributes and the context of action.

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<sup>114</sup> Hänggi et al. (eds), *Interregionalism*.

<sup>115</sup> Recently: Adelman, ‘Beyond aid and trade’; Hulse ‘Actorness Beyond the European Union’; Wunderlich, ‘EU and ASEAN Actorness’.

<sup>116</sup> Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism*.

<sup>117</sup> Baert, Francis, Tiziana Scaramagli, and Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Conclusion’, in Baert et al., *Intersecting Interregionalism*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>118</sup> Acharya ‘Regionalism beyond EU-centrism’, pp. 109-110.

Regional integration projects in Australasia and perhaps even more so in Southeast Asia have been marked by policymakers' ambivalence about some aspects of the European experience with regional integration, even as they have been receptive to other aspects.<sup>119</sup> The current challenges faced by the European Union—including Brexit, ongoing sovereign debt issues in the Eurozone, and popular resistance to major trade deals with Canada and the United States—will continue to affect the scope conditions for regional agency, by informing debate in other regions about the appropriate extent of integration and regional engagement with third parties. Avoiding theoretical or empirical benchmarks does not mean denying the demonstration power of important cases.

Indeed, that trans-Tasman integration was at least in part conceived of as a means of integrating with the Asia-Pacific suggests a less neat separation between 'regionalism' and 'inter-regionalism' than is frequently proposed. EU-based studies have demonstrated the role that inter-regionalism can play in promoting regional integration,<sup>120</sup> particularly when one regional partner (invariably, the EU) is more integrated than the other. That framework maintains a clear analytical distinction between processes that are *intra*-regional and those that are *inter*-regional. Seen in historical perspective, trans-Tasman integration (regionalism) as well as CER-ASEAN relations (inter-regionalism) are both parts of an effort to promote economic liberalization in the Asian-Pacific region and Australia and New Zealand's role in that process.

Attempts to negotiate 'mega-regional' trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific and the Atlantic suggest the potential for cooperative and regulatory processes that currently take place at the regional level to be relocated beyond current regional boundaries. Viewing regional actors as embedded in wider context prevents a false dichotomy between regionalism and inter-regionalism: 'regionalism' and 'inter-regionalism' may be complementary aspects of wider shifts in the governance of the global trade regime.

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<sup>119</sup> Leslie, 'Regionalism by Diffusion and Design'.

<sup>120</sup> Baert et al., *Intersecting Interregionalism*; Doidge, 'Joined at the Hip; *The European Union and Interregionalism*; Rüländ, 'Interregionalism'.

Whether in Europe or the Asia-Pacific, understanding and comparing the role of regional actors in these processes requires maintaining a simultaneous focus on region and context.

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