

**South American Policy Regionalism:
Drivers and Barriers to International Problem Solving**

Edited by Leslie Elliott Armijo, Markus Fraundorfer, and Sybil D. Rhodes

This Overview, shared with our colleagues, contains prepublication versions of the Table of Contents, List of Contributors, the Foreword by Jorge Heine, and the concluding chapter by the Editors.

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“Regional cooperation exists, but looks different in the global South than in the European Union,” claim the contributors to *South American Policy Regionalism*, which offers novel theory, methods, and Latin American case studies of joint governance efforts in nine international policy arenas, ranging from illegal drugs to artificial intelligence.

Contrasting three major schools of thought in international relations (highlighting power, institutions, and ideas), this book introduces the idea of international policy regionalism as a framework for informed debate about international policy-sector interactions in a regional space. Beginning with a conceptual approach applicable to any world region, it includes a brief history of Western Hemisphere regionalism to aid in future cross-regional comparisons.

An international group of contributors constructs rich narratives of the politics of Latin American policy sector evolution since the Cold War. Besides the aforementioned, included sectors span regional development banking, infrastructure planning, electricity distribution, migration governance, climate action, neglected tropical diseases, and food policies.

This volume equips readers from various academic disciplines and the policy world to understand the relevance of core international relations theory for the analysis of policy sectors that cross national borders, both within Latin America and elsewhere, and especially throughout the global South.

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Foreword

The election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Brazilian presidency in 2022 raised hopes for a revival of Latin American, and especially South American, regionalism after a period of extraordinary fragmentation. Brazil had left the Economic Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2019; the South American Union (UNASUR) had ceased to exist for all intents and purposes, and its purported successor, the Forum for the Progress and Development of South America (PROSUR), was little more than a WhatsApp group; in 2020, the region had been unable to agree on a common candidate for the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank, a position which was thus occupied, for the first time ever, by a US citizen; and the Organization of American States (OAS) was mired in internal disputes, which seriously undermined its effectiveness. Lula's commitment to regional coordination and cooperation, and Brazil's foreign policy leadership record, made it seem possible that Latin America might recover at least some, if not all, of the spirit of collective action that marked the first decade of the new century, one that overlapped with what has been described as the first "Pink Wave" of progressive governments in Latin America. The elections of left-wing governments in Colombia (a first) and in Chile, as well as in Bolivia and in Peru, that had preceded Lula's in 2022, seemed to herald the arrival of a second such wave, and thus of the revival of an equivalent set of regional bodies and projects that would give a fresh impetus and sense of purpose to collective action.

And in his first year in office, Lula gave as good as he got. He immediately had Brazil rejoin CELAC, and attended the latter's summit in Buenos Aires in January 2023; he hosted the first South American summit in nine years, held in Brasilia in May 2023; hosted a summit of the Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization (ACTO) in August 2023, a gathering that had also not been held for many years; and otherwise took a variety of initiatives aimed at bringing new life to regional cooperation. Yet, as of this writing, UNASUR has not yet been fully restored into being, with countries like Chile remaining studiously away; the vaunted cooperation between the so-called "Three Musketeers" of the South American left, presidents Lula, Boric, and Petro, has not translated into any meaningful action; and even a crisis as dramatic as Haiti's has not been able to trigger any sort of reaction from the very same countries that played such a key role in MINUSTAH, the United Nations stabilization mission deployed in Haiti from 2004-2017, the first such mission with a majority of Latin American troops.

Why this difficulty in regional cooperation and coordination?

This is one of the most significant questions looming over Latin America's international relations, and one that bedevils many of the region's observers. Enter this book, *South American Policy Regionalism: Drivers and Barriers to International Problem Solving*, with its novel approach to the issue. Its reconceptualization of the problem at hand, reframing it in terms of what it refers to as "international policy regionalism", provides us with a useful handle to approach the issue. Perhaps its most significant contribution lies in moving away from the traditional obsession with "hard" regional institutions like those to be found in the European Union, and the consequent bemoaning of their absence in Latin America. Instead, it proposes to focus on what it calls the cross-

border policy sector, and the *de facto governance* of it, instead of solely examining the regional international organizations formally in charge of managing it.

From a theoretical point of view, the book sets forth three explanatory perspectives to understand the dynamics at play in those cross-border interactions, perspectives with considerable explanatory power. They fall into the categories of “international power structures,” “issue arena incentives,” and “norm entrepreneurship.” The issue area case studies in the respective chapters provide us with eloquent evidence of their relevance as conceptual tools to disentangle the mysteries of regional cooperation (or lack thereof). I am especially struck by the contrast between the success of cooperation on infrastructure in Central America, and the failure of it in South America, as shown in the chapter by Agostinis and Palestini.

In this sense, this book breaks new ground and helps us to get a better grasp of the dynamics of Latin American international relations. It is theoretically grounded, drawing strongly on neorealism, but applies theory to real-world problems, such as those faced by policy-makers on a daily basis. Rather than denying the role of international power politics in these problems, it takes it quite explicitly into account.

Brazil’s role in the subregional context of South America is one that deserves special attention. On the one hand, its structure (size of landmass, population, and GDP, that put it among the largest countries in the world) and agency (empowered by its fabled foreign ministry, known as Itamaraty, and the leadership of recent presidents like Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) give it extraordinary advantages. That has allowed it, among other things, to leave behind the once existing rivalry with the other South American giant, Argentina. The other side of the coin, of course, is that the huge difference between Brazil and its neighbors on the subcontinent, leading to what the authors refer to as a unipolar- but-not-hegemonic situation, makes cooperation especially difficult.

In the rather bleak situation in which Latin America finds itself today, this book provides a glimmer of hope, stressing what has been and can be accomplished in various cross-border issue areas, generating knowledge about past barriers to successful regional or subregional cooperation, and thus power to move beyond them in the future.

The coeditors of the book, Leslie Elliott Armijo, Markus Fraundorfer, and Sybil D. Rhodes, have done a commendable job in developing a new theoretical framework to examine regional cooperation. They have also enlisted a remarkable team of contributors to research and elaborate on the case studies of the many issue areas that illustrate their argument. In building this three-legged stool of international relations theory, public policy perspectives, and empirical case studies, they have done much to enhance our understanding of the vexed issue of regional cooperation in South America. This book should be mandatory reading for scholars and policy-makers interested in looking for ways of ending the region’s growing marginalization in world affairs, and in releasing the power of collective action for doing so.

--Jorge Heine, Boston, March 2024

Chapter 13

Lessons from South American Policy Regionalism

Leslie Armijo, Markus Fraundorfer, and Sybil D. Rhodes

This book has argued that the dynamics of international policy sectors differ from those of policymaking within a single country. Even bearing in mind the challenges of policymaking in the national domain, governing and regulating policy sectors in the international space is intrinsically more difficult. The dilemma is that in today's world of truly global challenges that affect every single world region, country, and citizen to different degrees, cooperation across national borders is often vital. Truly global cooperation, however, is rarely easy to achieve, because of the lack of a supranational authority or constitutionalized system of rule like those that exist at the national level. Considering the sheer difficulties of cooperation within global policy sectors, it is reasonable to suppose that cooperative approaches to these challenges within regional or subregional policy sectors may be more successful. After all, the European Union, due to its heavily institutionalized and formalized transnational governance architecture, has been able to develop EU-wide approaches to specific global challenges in the form of EU-wide initiatives and policy programs, EU regulations, and EU law.

In other world regions, however, we are confronted with very different realities. Regional governance architectures in world regions in the global South are usually much less institutionalized and struggle to form common regional responses to the regional expressions of many global challenges. In other words, cross-border governance in world regions of the global South works very differently. Hence, the European Union does not serve as a helpful model of regional cooperation for other world regions. Latin America is a poignant example. On the one hand, it is among the most densely-institutionalized world regions in the global South, with a host of regional multilateral organizations and other formalized regional and sub-regional governance platforms. On the other hand, this highly complex regional and subregional architecture has historically underperformed in delivering effective regional governance (see Chapter 1). This said, not all effective governance has to take the form of highly-legalized, state-centered multilateralism: some forms of cooperation may be best described as loose, under the radar, *de facto* (as opposed to *de jure*), transnational, and/or technical.

We have introduced the idea of *international policy regionalism* (IPR), defined as the sum of all significant cross-border policy sector cooperation within a contemporary world region, whether this comes about via formal or informal channels. We then employed the IPR approach to elaborate a framework for theoretical and empirical analysis of international policy sectors. By setting the lens to focus on “the mutual

adjustment and cross-border governance that actually occurs, guided by a mix of official rules and unofficial but mutually understood norms and expectations within an international policy sector” (p. 4 of this volume), we sought to combine the study of international public policy with an international relations perspective. The volume’s approach weaves multiple theoretical strands from international relations into three broad explanations for the evolution of policy sector outcomes over time: we label these the operation of “international power structures,” “issue arena incentives,” and/or “norm entrepreneurship.” While the impact of rational incentives on policymakers’ choices (that is, issue arena incentives), as well as the role of individuals and non-governmental organizations as international change-makers (in other words, norm entrepreneurship), appear in existing public policy literature, the public policy field for the most part has not incorporated the consequences for regional policy governance of large geopolitical or geoeconomic factors (international power structures), such as the influence of regional powers or the impact of global US-China competition within regions of the global South.

The volume stands as a first experiment in applying the idea of international policy regionalism to an important world region of the global South: Latin America. We asked nine sets of experts on Latin American policy sectors to begin with a rough chronological narrative of efforts, both successful and failed, to cooperate across borders to address common challenges within specific international issue arenas as they evolved from the early 1990s to the present. Then we requested contributing authors to choose one of these three broad causal interpretations to structure the exposition (see Chapter 2) and to apply the investigative methods we associate with international policy regionalism (see Chapter 3). These methods are designed to create historical narratives with well-defined conceptual and temporal boundaries and clear explanation of the logic of international power structures, the pull of issue arena incentives, and/or the influence of norm entrepreneurs.

Our expectation was not that one theoretical approach would prove to be superior to the other two in all cases. Indeed, we believe that almost any policy sector can be fruitfully analyzed through the perspective of any of the three. At the start of this experiment, we did, however, have a couple of hunches. One hunch was that some policy issue arenas would reveal themselves to be very important to major international powers, who therefore would insert themselves into regional debates, highlighting the importance of the international power dynamics approach. A second expectation was that the material and institutional incentives characteristic of particular issue arenas always matter, although sometimes these may be overcome by or change in response to interstate power dynamics and/or intense normative commitments. And finally, we also expected that the strong influence of norm entrepreneurs in some issue arenas would surprise us. Along with our flexible and thus iconoclastic approaches to theory and methodology, we expected the IPR approach to reveal greater and more varied types of cooperation than other approaches to regionalism in Latin America. In particular, we expected to find looser, less-institutionalized, *de facto* cooperation to be important in at least some issue arenas. Our hope was that the lessons and insights from specific policy sectors would shed light on successful, or partially successful, regional initiatives in the past, and might prove relevant for the future within the

hemisphere, Latin America and the Caribbean, the South American continent, or other possible subregions.

So, what have we learned from the experiment? In this conclusion, we mine the nine sector narratives for lessons and insights. The next two sections of this chapter discuss these insights in two categories: those about broad theory and those about the nature of regionalism in Latin America. A final section offers broader conclusions about how to analyze international policy sectors in a changing world.

Insights from International Relations Theory

By pure coincidence, our invited policy sector authors distributed themselves evenly across the three international relations theoretical frames. The three chapters on illicit drugs, infrastructure, and finance tease out the impact of powerful countries whose political, economic, and cultural capabilities background and structure, often in ways that are difficult to recognize, regional and subregional cooperation efforts. The chapters on energy, migration, and climate illustrate how regional cooperation can also be shaped by the particular characteristics of an issue-arena. And the final three empirical chapters on neglected tropical diseases, food security, and artificial intelligence foreground the role that transnational actors, such as advocacy coalitions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and global partnerships, can play in promoting new ideas and norms that can innovate and even transform regional cooperation dynamics.

International Power Structures

The three chapters on illicit drugs, infrastructure, and finance employ the *international power structures* approach, shedding light on how powerful individual state actors or the balance of power among influential state actors within the region or the hemisphere have played a crucial role in shaping the incentives and disincentives of regional cooperation within the policy sector. In Chapter 4's analysis of the South American illicit drug trade and consumption regime, US hegemony is a central contributor to explaining the persistence of the dominant prohibitionist approach in the hemisphere. Beckmann's analysis concludes that this issue arena has been distorted by international power dynamics, as the United States insists on viewing drug policy as a security issue and thus a matter for "high politics," backing its policy preference for hardline policies with extensive military and economic assistance resources. From the 1970s to the 1990s, when regional cooperation among South American governments was almost universally based on prohibitionist policy models, South American governments were successful in establishing several multilateral governance structures, albeit with counterproductive effects that did not result in any reduction in the drug trade. This punitive policy package was supported in many countries by a domestic coalition that included the military, significant portions of the electorate, and criminal networks themselves. Although this normative environment started to change in the 2000s when several South American governments, including Brazil, increasingly questioned the prohibitionist approach, their attempt to construct a cross-border coalition in support of alternative policies with a public health focus oriented toward

within-country harm reduction has been unsuccessful. True, Uruguay has been a forerunner in implementing a highly progressive national public health policy, inspiring alternative policy debates on the drug trade not only in Latin America but globally. However, it is also one of the smallest countries in the region, lacking the political and economic power capabilities to lead the region in consolidating alternative regional governance structures.

In Chapter 5's focus on major subregional efforts to plan and construct large, physical infrastructure projects, Agostinis and Palestini compare South and Central America, showing that international power dynamics vary by regional subsystem and thus shape the outcomes of regional cooperation. A relatively symmetrical subregional distribution of national power within Central America enabled the emergence of regional cooperation that led to the Central American Electric System (SIEPAC), widely viewed as successful in implementing, and also regulating, such difficult tasks as load-sharing arrangements during periods of peak demand. By contrast, in South America promising initial cooperation among South American governments under the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) subsequently fell victim to the political rivalries between Brazil, the region's leading political and economic power, and Venezuela, an aspiring regional power in the 2000s. Venezuela under President Hugo Chávez formed an alliance with other far-left Bolivarian countries to reject the market-friendly direction of infrastructure planning policies, then being implemented by the regional development banks, principally the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and supported by MERCOSUR governments, including Brazil's center-left President Lula da Silva, as well as the continent's then center-right incumbents in Colombia, Peru, and Chile. Venezuela convinced its neighbors that it would be best to tackle their partisan and ideological disagreements over development head on, by moving infrastructure planning and implementation to the newly-created multipurpose South American regional organization, UNASUR, and demoting the IDB's role to that of "technical assistance." In practice, this move was the end of continent-wide heavy infrastructure planning. Those bilateral projects that were mutually-desired went ahead, but efforts to hammer out a South-America-wide vision faltered.

Chapter 6 analyzes regional cooperation around the provision of long-term finance. Unlike some of the other issue arenas in the volume, the narrative revolves around formal multilateral institutions, regional development banks (RDBs), distinguished by international transfers of real resources from, or guaranteed by, bank shareholders to borrowers. Armijo and Sepehr take insights from traditional structural realism, intended for the analysis of war and its prevention, and repurpose them for understanding how the distribution of state capabilities among the shareholders of three RDBs shaped members' incentives to cooperate. They find that the hemispheric Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is highly technically-competent and well-resourced, yet the United States retains an effective veto power on decision making. In this "hegemonic" system, Latin American countries have strong incentives to accept subordinate cooperation. The Development Bank of Latin America (formerly the Andean Development Corporation, and still the CAF) has a "multipolar" leadership structure, as its five North Andean founder-members retain majority voting and managerial control. Although CAF loans are more expensive for sovereign borrowers than those of the

World Bank and IDB, its member-borrowers value it for its flexibility and for the lack of conditions imposed by extraregional actors. Finally, the chapter speculates that the causes of the failure of the Bank of the South (Banco del Sur) can be attributed, at least in part, to its “unipolar-yet-non-hegemonic” membership structure, an interpretation that places less emphasis than many others on partisan or ideological disagreements among the founders, while instead highlighting the structural challenges of trust-building among neighbors with sharply unequal needs and power capabilities.

Thus, these three chapters spotlight one of the most basic IPR insights: when overall foreign policy considerations dominate issue-arena-specific incentives, zero-sum thinking and fears of cooperation are more likely. The drug policy narrative suggests that independent Latin American regional organizing is very difficult to sustain if opposed by the hemispheric hegemon. The infrastructure and regional development bank analyses both demonstrate how state rivalries, even peaceful ones between states with similar partisan leadership, such as Venezuela and Brazil in the early 21st century, can undermine regional institution-building. International power structures may complicate even technical and mutually-beneficial collaboration among non-state or technical actors and frustrate norm entrepreneurs.

Issue Arena (Dis)Incentives

And yet, policy cooperation may still be possible among countries in regions with challenging international power structures, if within-policy-sector incentives entice key players. Our contributors who wrote about energy, migration, and climate chose to employ the *issue area incentives* approach. These chapters varied in their emphasis on the nature of the incentives, which can be material (i.e., physical or geographical), economic, political, or institutional (as legal governance regimes, once established, generate subsequent path dependence). Chapter 7, on energy policy, lays bare the considerable disincentives to cooperate within a region characterized by a mix of energy importers and exporters, and subject to large fluctuations in global market prices for fossil fuel energy sources—at least if regional “cooperation” is defined as electrical energy integration via a network of long-term supply contracts. Dalgaard and Cardoso explore a puzzle: South America is characterized by infrastructure interconnection for electricity and natural gas but has very little policy cooperation or harmonization, even though there are many possible advantages to the latter, including reduced price volatility, energy diversification, and improved infrastructure for storage and distribution. The answer they point to is rooted in the overwhelming economic importance of energy to national-level economies and the incentives state leaders face. Some countries are “blessed” by abundant energy they can export, and others are net importers. The resulting dynamic is “zero-sum”: net exporters want to maximize revenues while net importers prioritize an affordable and dependable supply, a goal they often find is more easily met by seeking extra-regional partnerships and global market purchases. The chapter also highlights a dimension that the volume editors didn’t explicitly theorize: the importance of technological advances. Within the energy sector, improvements in liquified natural gas (LNG) storage have, Dalgaard and Cardoso argue, permanently shifted South American incentives away from energy

integration via traditional gas pipelines and toward LNG terminals and pipeline infrastructure.

In Chapter 8's discussion of immigration and asylum, Rhodes emphasizes influences coming from the economic and political-institutional structure of the regional issue arena, as well as from global rules and institutions. Information asymmetries make it difficult to classify people into migration categories, leading to predictable moral and political difficulties for receiving countries in discriminating between economic migrants and those seeking political asylum, as the latter are treated more generously. Asymmetries in labor markets can be a further disincentive for political leaders in wealthier states to negotiate to lift immigration restrictions. However, the underlying labor market mismatch is not as great for countries in Latin American region, especially South America, as it is within and among other world regions, which has facilitated the creation of open travel regimes. This relative lack of mismatch makes the immigration issue arena nearly a classic example of international policy regionalism as used in this volume. Less binding economic and demographic factors, as compared to other world regions, combined with reinforcing historical and cultural factors such as shared history and language, have led to the decentralized evolution of a flexible migration regime in most of South America. Rhodes argues that the reception of people fleeing Venezuela, particularly from 2014-18, demonstrates the relative success of South American migration regionalism. Without this de facto policy flexibility, Venezuelans would have had to rely on ambiguous, and in practice sometimes inhumane, global humanitarian law for refugees and asylum, because there is no functioning global regime for economic or "mixed" migration.

In Chapter 9, Below argues that the structure of the problems of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change make them especially conducive to free-riding. Global climate agreements are state-centric, but regional multilateral policy coordination in Latin America has been lacking, with next to no progress in curbing deforestation, or achieving verifiable national commitments for climate mitigation. Her chapter divides the countries of Latin America into three groups with regard to climate action: first, the "Bolivarian" critics of industrialized countries, second, the "Independent Alliance" of countries that are vocal internationally and also implement domestic climate policies, which are successful to a very limited degree, and third, several of the largest countries of the region, which commit to neither strategy. This combination has produced an opportunity structure favoring transnational advocacy as the only viable option for moving forward on preventing or reversing anthropogenic climate destruction. In particular, Below points to the role of subnational regions and cities and Indigenous Peoples' organizations committed to adaptation, resilience, and equity-minded strategies. Several Latin American cities have started to collaborate on urban climate action initiatives within global city networks, such as the C-40 network of megacities and the global network ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability). Indigenous peoples, particularly from the Amazon, joined forces to form a regional coalition and magnify their voice in international climate negotiations.

One way to think of the value of the issue arena incentives approach is that it is useful for isolating issue-specific payoffs to political leaders within each country of regional cooperation in distinct areas. Such payoffs may be economic, for example, an increase or decrease in growth rates, or reputational, including costs associated with not complying (or benefits to complying) with contractual legal obligations agreed via international treaties. Highlighting the disincentives to international policy cooperation might be seen as a dismal conclusion, were it not for the fact that in each of the chapters it is clear that these costs do not (necessarily) remain constant, which helps illuminate situations wherein attitudes may change and further cooperation may be possible, enabling the emergence of novel governance dynamics.

Norm Entrepreneurs

The chapters on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), food security, and artificial intelligence emphasize the *norm entrepreneurs* approach to the analysis of international issue arenas. In each case, the authors identified ideational frames about how transnational actors can initiate novel governance dynamics and break through barriers to regional cooperation that have been put in place by international power structures or the disincentives created by the particular characteristics of the issue arena. These novel dynamics can be initiated by either multilateral or transnational organizations, as exemplified by the case of NTDs. Alternatively, the diffusion of new norms can start right at the bottom, as with political activists in southern Brazil, only to be scaled up to the national and regional levels, as with efforts to establish an alternative food governance regime in South America. Alternative ideas can also be promoted by multilateral development organizations, academic institutions, and private actors, as shown in the case of artificial intelligence, as well as most of the other empirical narratives throughout the book.

In Chapter 10, Fraundorfer observes that in the case of parasitic diseases such as Chagas disease and the leishmaniases or arboviruses such as dengue, chikungunya and zika (all commonly grouped as NTDs), which severely affect millions of people in South American countries, regional cooperation has historically been scarce or non-existent. Even regional public health organizations rarely included NTDs on their agendas. And not even UNASUR, despite its relatively recent creation and the presence of an associated Health Council, made any substantive commitment to regional cooperation on NTDs. Nonetheless, regional cooperation initiatives for NTDs have emerged since the late 1990s, driven by a new global agenda championed by the WHO, PAHO, and global public-private partnerships such as the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi). This global agenda manifested differently in diverse world regions, with these international and transnational organizations acting as norm entrepreneurs to facilitate regional cooperation among Latin American governments, creating a “normative convergence between the regional and global levels” (Kacowicz 2018, 74).

Milhorance and Niederle’s Chapter 11 on food policy and family farming argues that an advocacy coalition from southern Brazil that formed in the early 1990s successfully mobilized policymakers at the national, regional, and international levels, thus shaping a new regional agenda on food security. This advocacy coalition,

promoting the importance of family farming in improving food security and reducing poverty in Brazil, took advantage of the space for civil society movements offered within the formal regional organization, MERCOSUR, to forge connections with similar advocacy movements in other South American countries. The result was a transnational regional movement able to exert pressure on South American governments to promote national programs in support of their ideas about food security, including via school lunch programs linked to production from family farms. This new norm of promoting family farming was subsequently embraced by some South American governments, particularly Brazil, and has since spread from the Southern Cone of South America outwards, helping to reshape the larger regional and global development agendas on food security and poverty alleviation.

In Chapter 12's discussion of artificial intelligence (AI), Arbix, Veiga, and Martin emphasize the role of ideas in nascent Latin American regional policy cooperation regarding the emerging issue of artificial intelligence, variously defined as ranging from machine learning applications to generative AI. These authors argue that subtle, Latin America specific, modifications of alternative regulatory frames originating in the global debates about AI are already occurring. For example, they observe that within the region privacy and surveillance are of great concern to political leaders, who do not want foreign governments spying on them. That is, the "privacy" dimension is less focused than in Western Europe on privacy rights for individuals. At the same time, the geostrategic concerns related to the global international system, and the US-China rivalry that dominate much of the debate in the United States, are thus far not very salient in Latin America. Furthermore, the Latin American competitiveness frame is as concerned about the US government as it is about big corporations. The authors point to regional multilateral organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, along with the regional office of the International Labour Organization and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, as the main actors that have put AI on the regional agenda as well as on national agendas. Thus far, political and social divides have not coalesced around particular views of AI in the countries of the region. The authors conclude that in this issue arena, the newest covered in the volume, Latin American policy cooperation is fragmented, but is emerging with a shape different to that in other leading world regions and countries, especially North America, Europe, and China.

Cross-cutting Patterns and Themes in South American Policy Regionalism

Besides our basic approach of international policy regionalism (IPR), several patterns and cross-cutting themes stood out to the volume editors as particularly important in these Latin American, although in practice largely South American, case studies of regional policy governance. We converged on four themes: first, the role of Brazil; second, the influence of multilevel (global-regional-national-and subnational) linkages; third, the geographic mutability of regions; and fourth, the impact of cooperation via formal yet policy-sector-specific organizations versus multipurpose regional organizations. None of these themes applied to all of the nine issue arenas examined, but each appeared in several of the cases.

First, an examination of the role of Brazil is inevitable. This finding reflects Brazil's large power capabilities vis-à-vis its South American neighbors. Even within the chapters discussing regional issue arenas in which the role of Brazil's national government and/or transnational actors appears less important, as in Below's discussion of Latin American participation in the global climate regime, its absence must be remarked on. Besides its large power capabilities, Brazil is also a mega-diverse country, home to the largest rainforest (the Amazon), the largest wetlands (the Pantanal), and the largest savanna (the Cerrado) on the planet. Given the global importance of preventing further deforestation in the Amazon Basin, nearly 60 percent of which lies in Brazilian territory (WWF-UK n.d.), the relative absence or passivity of Brazil's national government in Latin American climate organizing is surprising. Nor has the Brazilian government assumed a leadership role in coordinating a South American stance within the UNFCCC negotiations. In the issue-arena of finance, Brazil has also been blamed by many advocates of the failed Bank of the South for its lukewarm support of that continental regional development bank project. One reason that Brazil's government has been reluctant to engage in a more vigorous fashion within the continent is that its political leaders have preferred to join cross-regional coalitions with a global outlook. The most important of these have been the BRICS, which brings together major developing countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in a global club (Roberts, Armijo, and Katada 2018; Stuenkel 2021), and the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China), active in global climate negotiations (Hochstetler and Milkoreit 2015). On illicit drugs, Brazil assumed some leadership in the context of UNASUR to coordinate a South American approach to contest the dominant prohibitionist norm – but without lasting success. Apart from this instance, it was Uruguay, one of the smallest countries in the region, rather than Brazil, that showed innovative leadership in the form of its national marijuana legislation. Brazil's silence matters. Would regional dynamics on illicit drugs shift more significantly if the Brazilian government implemented an Uruguay-inspired national marijuana legislation program?

Other chapters show how fundamentally regional cooperation dynamics can change if Brazilian actors, either in the form of the national government or civil society, do become proactively involved. In the NTDs issue arena, the Rio de Janeiro-based Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), one of the leading public health research institutes on tropical diseases in the global South and a founding partner of the global Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), has catalyzed regional initiatives on novel research and development, as well as on disease control. In the food policy arena, Brazilian activists, NGOs, research institutes, and social movements formed the Citizens' Action against Hunger and Poverty in the 1990s to lobby the government on anti-hunger policies. Once a left-wing government under Lula da Silva came to power in 2003, this citizen movement was actively supported by the national government, transforming the civil society agenda into a national program on anti-hunger and anti-poverty strategies. The enormous success of this "Zero Hunger" strategy allowed this Brazilian government-civil society coalition to spread the key messages of this alternative food security approach to other countries in the region, influencing regional agendas and the global approach to food security. Arbix, Veiga, and Martin show how Brazil has taken the lead in the form of rights-based internet and AI policies and as a

member of a global coalition calling for less US dominance in internet governance. Moreover, every one of Latin America's seven larger states except Venezuela, which has been in acute crisis since at least 2013, has developed an official policy statement on AI. In the issue-arena of infrastructure, leadership from the Brazilian state was essential in conceptualizing and founding the IIRSA project. And on energy, Brazil initiated or actively participated in numerous energy integration initiatives from the 1950s through the 1990s.

Second, although the volume focuses narrowly on Latin America, and primarily on South America, one cannot help but notice the crucial role played by the transfer of ideas via global-regional-national-and subnational linkages in almost every individual issue-arena discussed in this book. In his study of NTDs, Fraundorfer highlights the important impetus that multilateral organizations dedicated to public health, notably the global WHO and the hemispheric PAHO, as well as the global public-private partnership DNDi, played in facilitating Latin American cooperation, involving national governments, ministries of health, research institutes, universities, not-for-profit foundations, and public laboratories from the region. In the illicit drugs issue arena, contributor Beckmann laments the spread of the dominant prohibitionist model from the United States to Latin America, which has shaped the preferences of national governments and publics across the region. Influence can also travel up, from the subnational to the regional and to the global. Milhorange and Niederle's food policy chapter illustrates this trajectory, with a civil society coalition from southern Brazil influencing first the national government and, supported by the unfolding success of a national program, regional multipurpose organizations like MERCOSUR and UNASUR, civil society coalitions in neighboring countries and, ultimately, global institutions like the FAO and the WFP. The emerging issue-arena of AI shows similar tendencies, with Brazil's *Marco Civil da Internet* and more recent national AI legislation inspiring a rights-based approach, driven mostly by civil society actors, within the region and globally. Similarly, other work by Armijo (2023), Fraundorfer (2015, 2018), and many others points to the role of individual experts from Brazil and other Latin American countries, including epidemiologists, agronomists, IT specialists, and economists as global norm entrepreneurs in debates over how to reform global governance institutions and reshape the global agenda in various issue-arenas.

The third cross-cutting theme that appears in many of the empirical chapters is the geographic mutability of the "region" of "Latin America." We had, of course, noticed this phenomenon previously—in fact, it was one of the reasons that we developed this book project. Nonetheless, its pervasiveness and importance in the narratives contained here hardly can be overemphasized. Various chapters in this volume began with a question about Latin America regionwide, and then determined that a focus on South America was merited, or opted to compare South American policy regionalism with cooperation in other, smaller subregions. In their study of infrastructure, Agostinis and Palestini show that Central American governments were willing to give limited but genuine supranational authority to sectoral regulatory and implementation bodies, which have performed relatively well, yet these authors find a different pattern in South America. For migration, Rhodes identifies a distinctive South American governance

regime that has been successful by some measures. Dalgaard and Cardoso also focus their analysis of energy cooperation largely on the South American continent.

Several authors focused on other subregions. For example, Armijo and Sepehr highlight the successful cooperation identified in the “multipolar” Northern Andean region as contrasted to “unipolar” South America, while Fraundorfer’s analysis of neglected tropical diseases revealed important roles for subregional initiatives based in the Southern Cone, Central America, the Andean region, and an alliance between Mexico and several Amazonian countries. The South American migration regime emerged out of smaller sub-regional organizations, particularly the MERCOSUR, which was also a venue for agricultural interests to organize, including both the traditionally dominant coalition of large agroexporters and the alternative coalition described in Milhorange and Niederle’s food policy chapter. Subregions can accumulate, as well as be subtracted. The chapter on migration mentions attempts to unite South America with the rest of Latin America. Below’s climate chapter discusses leadership by two opposing coalitions in which none of the three largest states (Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina) played an active role. The region of the Western Hemisphere as a whole played a role in the volume’s analyses of neglected tropical diseases, illicit drugs, and regional development banks. The volume’s international policy regionalism approach helps illustrate how the geographic scope of cooperation within a region or sub-region is an empirical question, and a dimension that may be contested and can shift over time.

The fourth cross-cutting theme was a bit of a surprise. We set up our methods for the IPR approach to begin with the international policy issue arena itself instead of the more usual approach for studies of comparative regionalism, which starts with a formal regional organization, or RIO. That is, we explicitly encouraged our contributors to look at informal, transnational actors and “governance” processes as well as formal grants of authority by states to regional treaties and regional multilateral organizations. We organized the investigations by policy sectors, seeking for cross-border policy challenges that seemed to cry out for cooperative and collaborative solutions that also crossed national borders. What we failed to problematize, however, was the possible differences between, on the one hand, *policy-sector-specific* formal organizations and informal coalitions, mainly concerned with solving concrete policy problems within specific international issue arenas, and on the other, multilateral and *multipurpose* regional institutions which acted as umbrella organizations for a wide variety of sector-specific affiliates. This is intriguing, as our case studies implicitly, if entirely unintentionally, challenge some of the existing regionalism literature.

Many scholars of international organizations consider multipurpose multilateralism a promising organizational strategy for progress in various policy sectors, with part of the rationale being that this provides a potential opportunity for negotiators representing a given country to trade gains in one sector in exchange for their promise of flexibility in a different policy sector. The accumulation of many such positive trades can increase mutual benefit and even reinforce norms of reciprocity and cooperation (Wallace 1976; Tollison and Willett 1979; Axelrod 1985). This is quite plausible. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume, Latin Americans have

founded a number of multipurpose, multilateral organizations, including the post-Second World War Organization of American States (OAS), the late 20th century Andean Community (CAN) and Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR, which is as much about political as economic cooperation, despite its name), and the 21st century Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and Economic Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Most of these organizations have had at least some subordinate policy sector entities linked to them. Yet this volume's case histories suggest that the strategy of attempting cross-sectoral grand bargains through a multipurpose multilateral institution hasn't worked very well in Latin America thus far.

Instead, in most of this volume's empirical chapters, greater progress in solving concrete policy challenges seems to have come from organizing, whether multilateral (state-to-state) or transnational, that mainly involved actors concerned with the specific policy sector. Granted, we set up the research design to discover sector-specific organizing. Even so, in several chapters, including illicit drugs, immigration, NDTs, infrastructure, and climate, sector-specific regional or subregional issue governance proved superior to other efforts that were more tightly-linked to overarching, multipurpose regional organizations. Cross-border cooperation on NDTs, rather than being led by the UNASUR Health Council or other bureaus or agencies within regional multipurpose organizations, was spearheaded by the freestanding health institutions WHO, PAHO, and DNDi. In the issue-arena of climate, regional multipurpose organizations were largely unable to unite South American countries on a common position. Instead, the technical negotiating group AILAC was in a better position to build bridges among different regional sub-groups and coordinate a Latin American and Caribbean approach in the international climate negotiations (UNFCCC). In the same vein, despite some agreements on energy integration initiated by sub-regional multipurpose organizations like MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, they did not drive cross-border energy linkages, which were dominated by bilateral technical frameworks. Similarly, UNASUR's Councils on the Global Drug Problem, on Energy, and on Infrastructure and Planning all had little impact on policy sector outcomes (see Chapters 4, 5, and 7). On AI, the newest issue arena discussed, there has been interesting involvement from a variety of sectoral organizations, none of which are directly linked to one another. These include the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, and the ILO's regional office, which has contributed to policy debates on labor issues and human rights. Possibly there are active benefits in this organizational fluidity and decentralization.

Final Thoughts

The need to understand how international public policy works in practice in different world regions is only likely to grow in the future. Do our Latin America-focused observations also hold elsewhere in the global South? Key findings include: the geographic mutability of regions; the prevalence of less-formalized cross-border cooperation; the large role of regional powers; and the essential contributions of technically oriented, policy-sector-specific institutions, not only in their issue arenas but also to the construction of regionalism itself. We hope that the volume's explanation of how to employ fundamental

insights from international relations theory to “see” and analyze international policy regionalism, in combination with the rich empirical narratives in the policy sector chapters, will prove useful to scholars, leaders, and anyone else interested in solving problems that traverse international borders, especially in regions of the global South.

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