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Fringe Regionalism

When Peripheries Become Regions

Frank Mattheis · Luca Raineri
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Pour Gaia
– F.M.

PREFACE

Peripheries and borderlands might sometimes be difficult to access, especially when located in deserts, mountain ranges or forests. Nonetheless, they are not devoid of cross-border activities and identities. Once we began to delve into what happens at the margins of the political maps that are so carefully drawn and celebrated by nation states, we quickly discovered quite the opposite. Over the past years, our respective doctoral and postdoctoral fieldwork had brought us to the Sahara, the Caucasus, the Congo Basin and the borderlands around the Iguazu waterfalls. We found places where people are actively constructing transnational regions, either in opposition or in complicity with state actors. Not only did the formal interstate regional organisations not have a monopoly over how a region should look and operate; in the peripheries, regional space was apparently shaped by a very different set of dynamics and actors.

Two of us (Luca Raineri and Alessandra Russo) had already uncovered striking similarities in our work and were looking for ways to make broader sense of this phenomenon. In 2016, we convened a small workshop entitled “Decentred Practices of Regionality” as part of the European Workshops in International Studies in Tübingen (Germany). Here, Frank Mattheis completed the triumvirate. Soon after the workshop, the idea of a joint publication took shape and, due to the richness of the cases and the depth of our theoretical debates, it became obvious that the most appropriate format would be a co-authored monograph. After successfully pitching the idea to our publisher, the to-ing and fro-ing of the writing process began, accompanied by several professional milestones, including vivas, more fieldwork in remote areas, and new academic positions.

Special thanks go to our language editor Angelina Zontine for her superb work in improving consistency and style. All three of us also have great appreciation for all the colleagues who participated in our workshop or commented on various parts of our research at one stage or another. We hope that our readers will include both those interested in empirically rooted stories starring borderlands and those seeking inspiration to overcome state-centrism and Eurocentrism in the study of regionalism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| AMU | Arab-Maghreb Union |
| AQIM | Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb |
| AU | African Union |
| CEMOC | Comité d'état-major opérationnel conjoint |
| CEN-SAD | Community of Sahel-Saharan States |
| CFA | Financial Cooperation in Central Africa |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| COBERM | Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism |
| CSTO | Collective Security Treaty Organisation |
| CUS | Commonwealth of Unrecognised States |
| ECCAS | Economic Community of Central African States |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| ENI | European Neighbourhood Instrument |
| EU | European Union |
| EUMM | European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia |
| GUAM | Organisation for Democratic and Economic Development |
| IR | International Relations |
| JNIM | Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims |
| MINUSMA | United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali |
| MUJAO | Movement for Oneness of Jihad in West Africa |
| NAFTA | North American Free Trade Area |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| NRA | New Regionalism Approach |
| OIC | Organisation of Islamic Cooperation |
| OSCE | Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe |