

IPPR Briefing Paper No. 38, October 2006

Transcending State-Centrism? Non-State Actors and Regionalism from 'below' in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Lesley Blaauw¹

Historically, the notion of a SADC region and regional community was constructed and defined by the region's states. A catalogue of events, such as the end of bipolar rivalry and the ending of apartheid, now offers southern Africans the opportunity to construct and define a region and regional community that lies beyond the confines of the region's states. While admittedly, SADC has responded to these events, the argument here is that a regional community is emerging that is fundamentally different from the one on offer by SADC states.

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the idea and organisation of the concept 'region' has elicited renewed international attention. This resurgence in the study of international regionalism is characterised by the revival of old regional organisations, the formation of new ones and the deepening of existing regional arrangements. This renaissance in the study of regionalism is, however, not only limited to the study of regional bloc formation by states alone. Because of the increasing obviousness of transnational and non-state phenomena in the post-Cold War era, contemporary studies of regions and regionalism recognise the need to transcend purely state-centric notions of regionalism. Phil Cerny argues that the study of regionalism should also be driven by politics: by ideology, by the actions, interactions and decisions of state actors, their private sector interlocutors and the wider public.² This calls for recognition that the conception of regions and the practise regionalism are not only state-centric projects. The definition of regions and regionalism needs to recognise that other actors also participate in the construction of regions and the practice of regionalism.

The imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), in most southern African countries and economic globalisation has seen the growth in transnational relations³. In the context of SADC, a 'new' approach to the study of regionalism opened-up possibilities for recognising that regionalism in its contemporary form is a multifaceted process that involves both state and non-state actors and occurs within the institutional space provided by states, but also outside of such space. In SADC, however, regional co-operation and integration

¹ Mr Blaauw is lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Namibia, Windhoek. His email is lblaauw@unam.na

² P. Cerny, 'Globalising the Political and Politicising the Global: Concluding Reflections on International Political Economy as a Vocation' *New Political Economy*. 4, 1 (1999), pp. 147-162.

³ Six states within SADC have implemented SAPs under the aegis of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These countries are Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Others such as Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland have voluntarily introduced elements of SAPs into their economic policies. B. Tsie, 'States and Markets in the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Beyond the Neo-Liberal Paradigm' *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 22, 1 (1996), pp. 75-98.

historically meant state-promoted regionalism. This could, by and large, be attributed to the minimal role non-state actors have played in such integration projects. Observers have not as yet considered sub-regional actors about how they view the region. States have hitherto occupied the central focus of regional analysis in SADC.

In the face of changing theoretical reflections and to respond to political changes in the region, SADC's institutions are increasingly preoccupied with accommodating non-state actors.

SADC and the accommodation of non-state actors

One of the pillars that anchor SADC is premised on the assumption that the social welfare of the people of the region can only be promoted by the popular participation of ordinary citizens in region-building. Paul Bischoff postulates that to uplift the social welfare of the regions' people, SADC has to: "Accommodate civil society in putting on the regional agenda issues such as respect for human rights, the redress of gender inequality, the promotion of people-centred development and the fight against poverty and inequality in the region".⁴

The achievement of the afore-mentioned presupposes that inter-state integration be complemented by a people-centred approach to development. This prompted SADC leaders to formulate a more inclusive regional order that accommodates non-state actors.

The 1992 Treaty states that:

*In pursuance of the objectives of this Treaty, SADC shall seek to involve fully, the peoples of the region and Non-governmental Organisations in the process of regional integration... SADC shall cooperate with, and support the initiatives of the peoples of the region and Non-governmental Organisations, contributing to the objectives of this Treaty in the areas of cooperation in order to foster closer relations among the communities, associations and peoples of the Region.*⁵

The above illustrates that SADC recognised that non-state actors have a role to play in the integration process. This approach, like new approaches to regionalism, suggests that regionalism is more comprehensive and dynamic and should be more than inter-state action. Towards this end, significant progress has been made to involve non-state actors in the integration process. For Kato Lambrecht:

*The most visible steps forward, albeit still insufficient, has been the involvement of civil society groupings and communities in shaping the environmental and gender agenda of the SADC. Moreover SADC institutions have made significant, though insufficient, efforts to consult workers' associations, NGOs, businesses, and other interest groups on designing and implementing regional processes and projects.*⁶

Businesses have been viewed as particularly important in driving the process of regional integration forward. The need to enhance the involvement of the private sector in decision-making processes has been identified by the SADC member states' political leadership. The Summit of Heads of Government of SADC in Blantyre, Malawi, 1997, endorsed recommendations calling for 'fundamental reforms and meaningful involvement of the private sector in economic policy making and implementation.'⁷ Indeed, business in the region is already playing a critical role in, amongst others, the building and rehabilitation of infrastructure, the promotion of the SADC region as an investment centre, and consequently job creation. These public-private partnerships are critical for the enhancement of developmental regionalism in the region.

⁴ P. Bischoff, 2002. 'Regionalism, SADC and Decision-making' in K. Adar and R. Ajulu. (eds.). *Globalization and Emerging Trends in African States' Foreign Policy-Making Process: A Comparative Perspective of Southern Africa*. (London: Ashgate, 2002).

⁵ SADC Treaty, 1992.

⁶ K. Lambrecht, 'The SADC: a developmental profile' in R. de Villiers and K. Lambrechts (eds.) *The IGD guide to the Southern African Development Community* (Johannesburg: Institute for Global Dialogue, 2001).

⁷ SADC, Summit Communiqués, 1998-2000. (Gaborone: SADC, 2000).



Hansohm and Peterson note some regular consultations on economic issues between government and private sector in Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.⁸ The drawback of this is that civil society involvement in regional economic capacity building is limited to business only. An inclusive and developmental regional order demands, however, the involvement of economic actors outside the purview of SADC's institutional structures. The government of Botswana has notable and regular consultative meeting with the private sector in the form of the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC). The HLCC, an advisory body chaired by the President, is a forum that allows private sector representation and participation in decision-making processes. To increase the sense of regionness, these consultations should be extended to include informal economic actors as well.

In March 2001, SADC governments and business, through the SADC Chamber of Commerce, met in Windhoek, Namibia, to discuss how these two bodies can mutually enable each other- to exploit their respective comparative advantages- to deepen the process of regional integration. More importantly, there seems to be a realisation in SADC, by both business and governments that regional disparities will only be eliminated through conscious intervention by governments, hence the introduction of a regional development fund.⁹ There is also a nascent civil society interest in matters of regional integration at national levels as evidenced by transfrontier parks, transport corridors and negotiations on the Trade Protocol¹⁰.

SADC, because of its focus on business only, however, failed to recognise that regionalism takes place in several sectors and involves a variety of non-state actors. The trans-border activities from below lend new meaning and value to the region and the notion of regional communities. These trans-border activities bears testimony to the fact that regional organisations and regionalism are political constructs, defined by ordinary people, and as such lend new meaning to region and the notion of regional communities. As such, regions can be moulded to accommodate the marginalised and begin to address broad-based development. What is needed, therefore, is to recognise that regions are also re-defined by the people who are conscious of their transnational past and form a transnational community in doing so. The institutional set-up of SADC also makes provision for non-state actors to play a role

Article 23 of the Treaty states that SADC shall seek to involve fully, the peoples of the Region and nongovernmental organisations in the process of regional integration.¹¹ William Lindeke charges that:

This emphasis creates a new role for business and non-governmental organizations within SADC. With this change, SADC moves away from purely statist orientation. Moreover, this initiative, though still limited, breaks new ground by trying to link SADC to civil society, as it is developing in the region's democratic struggles¹².

Subsequent amendments to the Treaty in 2001 make reference to the role that non-state actors, such as civil society, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and workers could play in regional integration efforts. However, there is as yet, no formal recognition that actors outside the SADC structures, primarily engaged in trans-border activities from 'below' lend new meaning and value to the region and the notion of regional communities. Not surprisingly, therefore, civil society in general still has problems establishing a durable relationship with SADC. This suggests that the institutional framework of SADC has not been sufficiently changed to match the ambitions of accommodating non-state actors. Amendments to the SADC Treaty seem to remedy this situation.

⁸ D. Hansohm and Peterson, 2001

⁹ Personal Communication, Mr. Andrew Ndshishi, 6th June 2001.

¹⁰ Hansohm and Peterson, 2001

¹¹ In the case of NGOs, this co-operation is normally regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU is normally submitted by the relevant NGO, discussed by SADC and the NGO and if agreement is reached ratified by the two bodies (Personal Communication, Dr. Stephen Kokeria, 25th January 2006).

¹² W. Lindeke, 'Southern African Development Community: Challenges Ahead' *TransAfrica* 10, 1 (1996) pp. 59-70.



The SADC Treaty provides for the establishment of a SADC NGO Council, which was established in 1998. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SADC and the SADC NGO Council was signed in December 2003¹³. The MOU between SADC and the SADC Council of NGOs entail the following:

- In pursuance of the objectives of the SADC treaty and the desire by NGOs to contribute to regional integration and development, SADC and SADC-CNGOs are committed to the principal goal, which is to contribute significantly to the improvement of the standards of living of the people of the SADC region through the participation of NGOs in a manner that will contribute to building a stable socio-economic and political environment in the SADC region.
- The partnership shall be aimed at the broad goals of eradicating poverty and creating employment opportunities in the countries of the SADC region as espoused in the SADC treaty.

The current restructuring of SADC has made several attempts to formalise links and relationships with non-state actors, through the establishment of National committees in each member country, but also through the agreements with regional associations and attempts to involve non-state actors in areas such as the implementation of the trade protocol. Moreover, SADC documents fail to recognise that actors outside SADC structures play a crucial role in promoting regional integration. Civil society, thus, must create the potential economic and social space to play an important role in determining the content and scope of regionalism in SADC. The above compels us to recognise that 'states are not the only regionalisation actors, and markets, civil society- as well as external actors- are deeply involved in processes of regionalisation, including its political dimensions'.¹⁴ Actors involve in trans-border activities lend new meaning to the notion of regions and regional communities.

In the final analysis, SADC can and should make greater institutional space for regional, non-profit NGOs and other civil society actors. The SADC should encourage its epistemic community or network of professionals and individuals to have an input in the deliberations and diplomacy surrounding human and state security, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. James Mittelman argues that in the case of SADC 'the formal regional infrastructure to support civil society projects is weak'¹⁵. This suggests that even though SADC make explicit reference to the need for civil society involvement in its regional integration programme, in practice little civil society involvement actually occurs. This has compelled non-state actors to look 'beyond the geometry of state-sovereignty' in addressing problems as unemployment, poverty, resource scarcity, etc.

Beyond the Geometry of State Sovereignty: Regionalism from 'below' in SADC

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Transnational relations across the southern African region, manifested in interactions among non-governmental organisation and more broadly informal trade and cultural networks, have been neglected in regional integration efforts in the sub-region. This is largely due to the fact that, in SADC, the disposition of states remains critical in determining the scope and content of both inter-state and transnational relations. Yet, regions and the formation of regional communities are also social and political constructs, which takes place in the context of complex economic and social linkages, among multiple actors.

Fredrik Söderbaum asserts that 'state-led regionalism in Southern Africa has had some positive impact on economic development but the problem is that up until now it has largely lived a life of its own as politically elite projects separated from market demands and civil society'.¹⁶ This means that up to now, the interpretation of a regional community in SADC remains the prerogative of the narrow interests of regional elites. From this

¹³ Personal Communication, Abie Dithlake, 25th January 2006).

¹⁴ F. Söderbaum, and I. Taylor, *Regionalism and Uneven Development in Southern Africa*. (London: Ashgate, 2003).

¹⁵ J. Mittelman, 'Globalisation and environmental resistance politics' *Third World Quarterly*. 19, 5 (1998). pp. 847-872.

¹⁶ F. Söderbaum, 'The Dynamics of Security and Development Regionalism in Southern Africa' p.111.



reading, it implies that states in southern Africa provide the only path to regional community. Regionalism is, however, a comprehensive and multifaceted process taking place at various analytical levels and involving both state and non-state actors. This suggests that the fostering of closer ties between and among governments has to be complemented by governments promoting grassroots co-operation among non-state or civil society actors across borders, even outside of the institutional structures provide for such co-operation. New approaches to the study of regionalism, which take place across a number of dimensions, accommodate and encourage such co-operation.

In this regard, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have an integral role to play in enhancing the process of development from 'below'. This is because Nongovernmental organisations may provide instruments, which emphasise the participation of the poor. However, unlike Europe where social forces are perhaps stronger and better organised, SADC has a moderate history of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working within a regional framework. Ansu Datta's reminds us that 'many non-governmental regional organisations in Southern Africa have functioned only sporadically'¹⁷. In SADC, however, the liberation movements, churches and trade unions have a history of transnational collaboration. Here the concern is with NGOs involved in transnational networks, which focus on issues such as democratic governance and poverty alleviation.

One such organization is the SADC Council of NGOs. The SADC Council of NGOs called on SADC governments to take action on civil liberties in Zimbabwe and Swaziland in August 2003, illustrates that strategic networks are already being formed among NGOs in the region on issues of governance. It also shows that local goals can be achieved by reaching out to the broader region in order to realise ostensible national goals.

This offers southern Africans the opportunity to construct a regional community based on shared concerns and charted by human-centred politics. To construct such a community, calls for a break with the traditional models of state-dominated and elite driven approaches. A new paradigm to community-building in SADC calls for a people-centred and participatory approach. Non-state actors, therefore, could also contribute to the definition and organisation of social space and political community taking place in the region. As such, they contribute the constitution of the social reality that give meaning to the notion of region and the regional communities. Regionalism as a normative project should, therefore, recognises the importance of regionalist processes from 'below', as crucial to the definition of regions and the formation of regional communities.

In SADC, this presupposes the building of regional networks, among both state and non-state actors, which are aimed at constructing new approaches to development and human security. This important consideration is acknowledged by SADC. The establishment of a Gender Unit at the SADC Secretariat in 1998 bears testimony to this "new awareness". Fundamentally, the Unit is charged with the responsibility of advising all SADC structures on gender issues and to ensure that a gender perspective permeates the entire SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiatives¹⁸. Another indicator of this 'new awareness' is the SADC NGO Council, which, while independent of SADC's formal structures, are recognised by the body¹⁹. If effectively operationalised, the SADC-CNGOs could be a key boost for regional integration and for civil society's role in the process. Another organisation that was envisaged to play a significant role that would boost civil society's role in the regional integration process is the SADC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASCCI).

Mareike Mein notes that:

¹⁷ A. Datta, 'Strategies for Regional Cooperation in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa' in B. Oden and H. Othman (eds.) *Regional Cooperation in Southern Africa- A Post-Apartheid Perspective*. (Uppsala: The Scandanavian Institute of African Studies, 1989).

¹⁸ Representation by women in various positions of power remains limited. Only in Botswana, Malawi and South Africa are women adequately represented in parliament.

¹⁹ Glenn Farred, Personal Communication, 16th October 2002.



The aim was to link the national chambers in Southern Africa and create a regional network to combine the voices of the private sector to promote its interests with SADC officials. Up to now, however, ASCCI remains little more than the sum of its parts and reflects the weaknesses of its constituent members²⁰.

Significant to note is the fact that the SADC Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the NGO sector were able to provide considerable input to the Trade and Transport Protocols²¹. One may, however, argue that the above represent attempts to reinforce the legitimacy of prevailing order, by working within the parameters set by states of the region.

The above means that the disposition of member states remains crucial in determining and enforcing common policy parameters to make regional integration and the further growth of transnational relations possible. Consequently, the legitimacy of political authority encroaches on the political and social space in which NGO activity can develop and expand. As such, efforts by SADC mirror the SACU regime, which remains statist in orientation. By and large, therefore, the emergence of organic transnational connections among national civil societies in southern Africa needs to occur outside the statist framework. Thus, it is necessary to look beyond historically constituted frameworks or structures within which economic and political activity takes place in SADC.

Facilitating and reinforcing transnational connections among national civil societies in southern Africa would be an essential element in any sustainable pattern of integration. A recent demonstration in Swaziland illustrates that civil society is increasingly being looked at as a motivational force for change. In response to the government legislation that banned free political activity in Swaziland, the Swaziland Solidarity Network, which represents trade unions and pro-democracy groups, called on South African businesses to restrict trade with that country for 3 days in December 2000. The trade union also asked the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Mozambique Workers Federation to support the blockade²². The actions of these non-state actors not only leads to transforming the region's economic and political landscape, but also implies that social relations include a regional dimension.

The movement in Swaziland is part of a broader association, the Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN)²³. Ostensibly this movement is concerned with issues of trade²⁴, but also looks at issues such as regional peace, human security and democracy²⁵. The Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network has over the years established various sub-networks and a debt tribunal, which investigates how the issues of debt should be addressed within a regional framework, provides the impulses on how such sub-networks should be established. The establishment of such regional sub-networks on debt is necessary, and provides the right countervailing power to the current situation where countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia, are attempting to solve critical debt issue unilaterally. Organised civil society actors as agents for a new region must engage in such initiatives and ensure that the poor and the marginalised in SADC benefit from it.

²⁰ M. Mein, 'Are Economic Partnership Agreements Likely to Promote or Constraints Regional Integration in Southern Africa?' *Monitoring Regional Integration in Southern Africa* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, 2004).

²¹ W. Breytenbach, (et al) *Monitoring Regional Integration in Southern Africa* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, 2002).

²² (The Namibian, November 30, 2000).

²³ SAPSN has a growing membership with a broad range of civil society organizations and institutions, including trade unions, development NGOs, and church-based movements. With the exception of Botswana, SAPSN have managed to secure links in Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. (Eunice Mafudikwa, Personal Communication, 8th November 2002)

²⁴ The issues that has hitherto been addressed by SAPSN ranges from privatisation, regional integration, the African Growth and Opportunities Act, the WTO, the Post-Lomé negotiations, and the role of South Africa in SADC.

²⁵ Indeed, the formation of SAPSN was a result of various national and regional processes during the course of 1999 around the inter-linked issues of debt, structural adjustment and globalisation. (Eunice Mafudikwa, Personal Communication, 8th November 2002).



More critically, the issue is to be linked to the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which is of interest to all SADC countries²⁶. Patrick Bond suggests that a regional ideology around the issue of debt can be built by, for instance, invoking the spirit of the national liberation²⁷. Indeed, this seems to be happening. Leading southern African social movements and church organizations working on debt from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, signed the Lusaka Declaration on debt in 1999.²⁸ Such issue-specific networks, which occur ostensibly outside the purview of state influence, are critical for fostering a developmental regional civil society in southern Africa. More critically, it points to efforts to create alliances and coalitions on debt at a regional level.

The significance of Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN) is that this organisation is forging links that can be used as the building block for a developmental regional civil society, which transcends state-centricism in southern Africa. SAPSN has also established relations with the 'TRADE' organisation, with the aim of expounding the position of Southern Africa in agricultural negotiations from a non-governmental perspective. Similarly, it is working with several African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) regional networks on the Post-Lomé negotiations. Members of the Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network is also building linkages in the wider context of the Africa Trade Network (ATN), to formulate a position on the Africa Growth and Opportunities ACT (AGOA), a trade pact concluded between the United States of America and African countries. These organisations do not engage national states, or SADC, ostensibly because regional states exclude them from the process of economic policy formulation.

The issues, which these non-state actors seek to address, include, *inter alia*, democracy, human rights, environmental degradation and migration. These functional linkages established by trans-regional actors point to the impact of regional norms on the growth and the influence of civil societies at domestic level. This calls for the re-organisation of economic and social relations. In a situation of this new regionness, individuals and marginalised communities are accorded the opportunity to interact with the wider region and the rest of the world as a means of advancing economic and political goals. The delimitation of the region will have to decidedly be determined by actual practice, and not just (physical) geography or formal political and economic co-operation. As such, a new approach to regionalism in SADC, must move beyond any static notion of region and regionness and replace it with the dynamic notion of the region as a social construct.

The campaign by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, the Swaziland Campaign against Poverty and Economic Inequality, the Malawi Economic Justice Network, and peasants from Lesotho, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development' which also occurs under the auspices of SAPSN²⁹, provides the impulses for such a new approach. This suggests that the dominant conception of a regional community in SADC driven by states alone is increasingly at odds with events on the ground. Moreover, it represents a compelling example of both developing identity and community in formation beyond national borders. Its also suggests that the route to community in the region may well lie beyond the discourses of power which have constructed the region's current state system. As such, using state-centric lenses to define SADC, suggests a poor basis for understanding the region.

The Southern African Human Rights NGO Network, which promotes adherence to international human rights norms and standards, is but one example of this³⁰. While this organisation is recognised by SADC, it has few formal links and engagements with the organisation³¹. Despite this, the Network continues to promote

²⁶ SAPSN is well poised to co-ordinate this activity, since it is already a core of the Jubilee South. (Eunice Mafudikwa, personal communication, 8th November 2002).

²⁷ Patrick Bond, Personal Communication, 16th October 2002.

²⁸ P. Bond, *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2001).

²⁹ Patrick Bond, Personal Communication, 16th October 2002.

³⁰ Ozias Tungwarara, Personal Communication, 27th September 2002.

³¹ Ozias Tungwarara, Personal Communication, 27th September 2002.

transnational linkages among like-minded NGOs in the region, to build capacity for, *inter alia*, human rights education, campaigning against police brutality and the promotion of freedom of expression. In such a way, it continues to deliberately enhance its capacity for engaging regional bodies like SADC. For Ozias Tungwarara the strategic challenge for non-state actors specifically is how to harness their collective power to be able to influence this interface in the global context³².

Sandra MaClean, writing on southern Africa, concludes that 'to the extent that these various NGOs build horizontal and vertical networks for communication, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing purposes, they appear to contribute to emerging sense of regional citizenship'³³. These NGOs also contribute to a sense of regionness. The calls made by 13 NGOs in Windhoek, Namibia in 2000 for a regional discussion on land reform and land redistribution highlight this plight. Primarily the NGOs argued that social development should be both people-centred and people-driven.³⁴ They also postulated that poverty is a regional issue that cannot be addressed in a haphazard fashion, as is currently the case³⁵. This in essence would enable NGOs to contribute to decisions about the content and scope of regional development and growth. The Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) can play a decisive role in this regard, because of their largely bottom-up approach.

Sanusha Naidu points out that SARPN is a regional poverty network does not have a membership but rather is a public policy platform for drawing on issues of poverty and the types of measures and responses that are being developed to address it. It caters for actors in the realm of poverty to be able to exchange with each other their work in the field of poverty. These include policy makers, development practitioners, academics, civil society actors from grassroots and community based level as well as the private and public sector³⁶. This suggests that SARPN attempts to co-ordinate the processes of formal and informal regionalism so critical for the success of new regionalism³⁷.

With the resurgence of neo-liberalism that is increasingly asserting its dominance in national development strategies and plans in SADC, the ideological orientation of an organisation like SARPN, should be based on search for a modicum of protection and livelihood for the poor and the marginalised in southern Africa. Civil society needs, however, to play a particularly important role in poverty alleviation. Ozias Tungwarara suggests that with regards to issues such as poverty civil society needs to articulate citizens' interests, by making themselves relevant in communities. This demands that like-minded civil society actors have an organically defined mandate, based on real and identifiable targets³⁸.

This type of interaction, featuring direct people-to-people engagement and co-operation builds solidarity and bridges between peoples of the southern African countries, and contributes to mobilising public opinion in support of southern African co-operation. Moreover, many South and southern Africans have made their homes in countries other than their own in the region. These experiences may help facilitate and play a decisive role in the development of a regional consciousness because this type of co-operation and interaction builds bridges and solidarity among and between the people of the region. This in turn contributes to mobilising public opinion in support of southern African co-operation and integration.

³² Ozias Tungwarara, Personal Communication, 27th September 2002.

³³ S. MaClean, 'Peace-building and the New Regionalism in Southern Africa' in N. Paku (ed.). *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, (London: Praeger, 2001).

³⁴ (The Namibian, August 4, 2000).

³⁵ A most striking feature of the meeting between these NGOs is the recognition that not only governments do not have a region plan for poverty alleviation, but that NGOs themselves need to co-ordinate their attempts at poverty alleviation on a region-wide basis (The Namibian, August 4, 2000).

³⁶ Sanusha Naidu, Personal Communication, 1st November 2002.

³⁷ Sue Mbaya notes that SARPN do not work with people who are not part of national NGO structures. The work of national NGOs that are part of SARPN is to mobilise those on the fringes of society that are most affected by poverty (Personal Communication, 26th January, 2006).

³⁸ Ozias Tungwarara, Personal Communication, 27th September 2002.



Similarly, special attention should be given to the establishment of issue-networks among organisations representing the self-employed, neighbourhood groups and non-governmental voluntary organisations that have sprung up through the region. They have valuable experience and expertise to share on how to get organised and how to deal with daily problems of economic, physical, and environmental survival. More importantly, their trans-border activities lend new meaning to regions and the notion of regional communities. Their activities, thus, allow them to form a transnational community from 'below'.

Glenn Farred argues that the type of networking around small scale farming, indigenous people, and trans-frontier parks allow local communities to contribute to building a sustainable civil society in SADC³⁹. Gathered together as a regional force, it is hoped that NGOs in particular will transcend the national outlook on problems that confront the region. What should be of special interests are voluntary organisations in which women participate. Indeed, women represent a key social force for SADC co-operation at the grassroots level, for they are able to find easily a common language across borders and continent, united by the same similarity of their experiences and roles in society. Fredrik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor, writing on the informal market in Mozambique, point out that:

The informal market expanded to all corners of the country as well as linking up with neighbouring countries, marking the beginning of the institution of mukhero, a largely informal movement of people, mostly women, buying and transporting all types of goods, vegetables, fruits, clothes and small home appliances, between Mozambique and South Africa and Swaziland to buy products to sell on the informal market.⁴⁰

By allowing women to play a more proactive role in the economic, political and social spheres (the all-embracing security scope), provides them with an opportunity to advance and protect their interests. Towards this end, the education of women is a precondition to building a sustainable civil society in southern Africa. According to Ken Booth and Peter Vale educating women is a necessary building block in a security policy, which aims to reduce population growth; to combat the social and economic difficulties that arise from disease; and to overcome the problems that arise from inadequate economic development. They rightly conclude that without the emancipation of women there will not be lasting regional security [and development] in Southern Africa⁴¹.

The exclusion of women would make the process of regionalism less comprehensive and multifaceted. This compels us to re-constitute state-civil society relations in SADC. As Francis Kornegay illustrates, the impulses for reconstituting state-civil society relations in SADC already exists. This is demonstrated by:

The recent unprecedented letter by the Catholic bishops indicting Mugabe's government, and the forward position of the church communities in Zambia and Malawi in opposing life presidencies, indicate that an outline of a multifaceted strategy to reverse the [anti-democracy] trend in the region is beginning to suggest itself.⁴²

Kornegay suggests further that the ecumenical group in southern Africa should support the search and sustenance for democracy on a regional scale⁴³. In such a way, these groups could positively contribute to the establishment of durable structures of governance and increase regionness. In addition to the above organisations, more spontaneous informal networks have also taken root in the region. Writing on southern Africa, Sandra MacClean asserts that:

³⁹ Glenn Farred, Personal Communication, 16th October 2002.

⁴⁰ F. Söderbaum, and I. Taylor, *Regionalism and Uneven Development in Southern Africa*. p. 5.

⁴¹ K. Booth and P. Vale, 'Security in Southern Africa' p.301.

⁴² (The Star, 14 May 2001).

⁴³ Ibid.

Informal groups have formed various liaisons in the region as protective gestures as well as various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that operate at a regional level for the redirection of policy in areas of environment, human and economic rights, basic needs, and gender equity.⁴⁴

Although most of these strategies are related to the struggle for survival, they contribute significantly to processes of regionalisation 'from below' and increased region-ness. These spontaneous transnational processes also illustrate that regionalism in SADC re-defined by 'the people' who are conscious of their transnational past and form a transnational community in doing so. However, NGOs in SADC, like elsewhere in the South, face a number of problems. The most critical of these problems are that regional governments have an innate distrust of civil society and often undermine their ability to play a meaningful role in regional development.

The exclusion of NGOs by SADC member states when the Organ for Politics, Defence and Security was adopted casts doubt about the gravity of SADC governments to embrace a broader spectrum of stakeholders into the security arena. Earlier agreements between SADC and regional NGOs to include a human rights monitoring mechanism into the Organ were discarded shortly before formalisation of the body.⁴⁵ This state of affairs seems to verify Fredrik Söderbaum's conclusion that: 'the SADC organ as such is also state-centric and designed to promote the national interests and enhance the political stability of the existing regimes'⁴⁶ This suggests that the dominant conception of a regional security community in SADC is increasingly at odds with events on the ground. A new approach to the study of regionalism in SADC, view the security of states and non-state actors as mutually inclusive.

In recent times NGOs have also pronounced that they 'still have no access to the SADC national contact point, nor are they allowed access to SADC summit meetings or discussions concerning the organ on politics, defence and security'⁴⁷. In 2005, NGOs also came under attack in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, where questions were raised about independence, by the presidents of those respective countries. Such an understanding, James Mittelman argues, fuels this perception, that 'nationally based NGOs serve as proxies for international agencies, with little or no organic connection to the roots of society'⁴⁸. What this suggests is that NGOs, like governments of the region, may also be under pressure to placate donors, instead of serving as bonding agents in bottom-up struggles of the poor and the marginalised. In addition to being agents that appease donors, NGOs also at times receive funds meant for governments.

This makes the relationship between national NGOs and national governments acrimonious at best. This difficult relationship between NGOs and governments is replicated on a regional scale. This was reiterated by Glenn Farred who points out that civil society in SADC are not yet clear on the objectives it want to achieve from formal participation in the SADC structures⁴⁹. To set-out clear objectives the SADC Council of NGOs 'brings all the regional organisations together every year through the SADC Civil Society Forum This is to facilitate for planning and sharing perspectives'⁵⁰.

SADC's treatment of NGOs has serious implications for future inter-governmental and non-governmental relations. James Mittelman argues that regional institutions in southern Africa, so far 'articulate only sporadically with the bearers of change within civil society- women's movements, peasant organizations,

⁴⁴ S. MaClean, 'Peace-building and the New Regionalism in Southern Africa' p. 128.

⁴⁵ (South Scan, 5 July, 1996).

⁴⁶ F. Söderbaum, 'The New Regionalism in Southern Africa' *Politeia* 17,3 (1998), pp. 6-21.

⁴⁷ (Sunday Independent, February, 1999).

⁴⁸ J. Mittelman, 'Globalisation and environmental politics' p. 860. To ensure that suspicion about the motives of NGOs is eliminated, the SADC-CNGOs: "... are in the process of developing a Development Charter and Code of Ethics for Southern Africa..." (Abie Dithlake, Personal Communication, 25th January 2006). This would ensure that a framework for dialogue between NGOs and governments in southern Africa is established.

⁴⁹ Glenn Farred, Personal Communication, 16th October 2002.

⁵⁰ Abie Dithlake, Personal Communication, 25th January 2006.



environmental groups, pro-democracy advocates, etc'⁵¹. These points to a need to develop fragile political institutions and the nascent civil societies regionally. Moreover, it provides ample evidence that the democratic dimensions needed to incorporate the regions' civil society are absent.

The solution to this obvious predicament, according to Peter Vale, is the following:

When SADC gathers in formal conference, civil society needs to set up its own stall. A loud and very messy talk-shop which can air the increasing amount of disquiet which the region's people- as opposed to their governments- feel about the processes which democracy and development through Southern Africa. Energy, environment, development, human rights, and gender questions: there must be no end to the talking'⁵².

By working beyond the parameters accorded by state-centric definitions of regions and regional communities, NGOs contribute to increasing the quality of regionness in southern Africa. Sandra MaClean observes that:

To the extent that these various NGOs build horizontal and vertical networks for communication, advocacy and knowledge-sharing purposes, they appear to contribute to an emerging sense of... regional citizenship.⁵³

NGOs, therefore, fulfil a critical role as builders of a region and regional community that transcends state-centrism and enhances regionalism from 'below'. Moreover, a social identity beyond the territorial state in SADC is considerably enhanced by increased social contacts and informal economic transactions, which not only create a social system, but also facilitates some sort of region-ness. By sharing a social identity, communities are allowed to broaden the definition of a region.

Transcending State-Centrism: Informal Regionalism in SADC

Contemporary studies of regions and regionalism recognise the need to transcend purely state-centric notions of regionalism. Non-state actors also have a role to play in the construction of regions and regional community. This suggests that social and political forces beyond the state also drive regionalism. Beyond the expansion of the region in its institutional form, opportunities have also opened up for non-state informal actors to broaden the conception of the region and the notion of a regional community in southern Africa. Already developments within the region accords ordinary people the change to construct a southern Africa that lies beyond the geometry of state-sovereignty. These opportunities are brought about by new theoretical framings and political changes in the region. Fredrik Söderbaum notes that:

The profound implications of globalization, regionalization, and the restructuring of the nation-state have made it necessary to transcend the conventional obsession with national government and recognize the emergence of new and revised authority and governance structures, both "above" and "below" the level of national government.⁵⁴

Changing governance structures in SADC, which calls for broadening regional citizenship, have led to changes in the dynamics of regional politics. As such, it is no longer possible to assert the state in SADC as the overriding focus of political identity. For Peter Vale the above is due to the fact:

That southern Africans believe that the state system no longer offers solutions to their everyday problems: it neither delivers security nor satisfies a desire for community. As a result, they are driven to find fresh terrains of regional intercourse, like cross-border trading, and to explore old ones, like cross-border migration.⁵⁵

⁵¹ J. Mittelman 'Rethinking the "New" Regionalism in the context of Globalization' *Global Governance* 2 (1996), pp. 189-213.

⁵² Peter Vale, Personal Communication, 20th November 2002.

⁵³ S. MaClean, Peace-building and the New Regionalism, p. 950.

⁵⁴ F. Söderbaum, 'Modes of Regional Governance in Africa: Neoliberalism, Sovereignty Boosting and Shadow Networks' *Global Governance*. 10, 4 (2004) pp. 410-426.

⁵⁵ P. Vale, Security in South Africa, p. 135.



Indeed, cross-border trading and migration have opened-up opportunities to construct a SADC that lies outside the confines of states in the region. The expansion and broadening of the conception of regionalism in southern Africa, and the definition of the region itself needs to bear in mind that 'the region's people are in search of communities that lie beyond the privileges that have until now been accorded to the region's states and their governing elites.'⁵⁶ The conception of regions and regionalism in southern Africa, therefore, need to be moulded to accommodate the poor and marginalised. It is, thus, necessary to recognise that 'the relative strength and mutual relationships between the top-down and bottom-up forces determine the dynamics of regionalism and regionalization in Southern Africa.'⁵⁷ This creates the opportunity for co-operation and inclusion, which in turn could strengthen regionness.

Fredrik Söderbaum observes that:

There exists also a more informal economic and socio-cultural cross-border interaction among small and private business, traders and people, ethnic and cultural networks, and so forth more or less all over Southern Africa. Well-known examples include the cross-border interaction in Southern Malawi and Mozambique, eastern Zimbabwe and Mozambique; southern DRC and Zambia, or, to use a more specific case, the Zimbabwean women traders connecting Harare, Gaborone, and Johannesburg in an informal trading network. Some of these cross-border activities arise for socio-cultural and historical reasons, as a consequence of the irrelevance of current national borders, while others are based on price and institutional differences between countries with common borders.⁵⁸

The migration and cross-border informal economic activities of the people of SADC, suggests that equitable and sustainable development can only be achieved on the basis of full economic and political participation of the poor. In addition, informal trade and socio-cultural, which takes place across borders in SADC, could also assist in deepening regional integration and a sense of region-ness. This suggests that the trans-border activities of these informal actors lend new meaning to conception of a SADC region and what constitute a regional community.

The construction of a new regional community need to be based on understanding these spontaneous intercourses, which have been born from the economic mingling, brought about by increasing cross-border contact. Such spontaneous networks of individuals and groups that often use historically embedded cultural and social ties transcend state-centric notions of regions and regionalism in SADC. As such, they form a transnational community that lies beyond the narrow conception of regionalism by states.

James Mittelman provides another compelling example of the search for a regional community, which lies outside the frame presented and represented by states. He asserts that:

The attitudes among these peasant farmers is that borders are a nuisance that interfere with both their livelihood and relations with kind, redound to the advantage of the well-to-do, and are another way that the political authorities seek to impose control. In this instance, the state is seen as constraining crossborder flows- of fish, ivory, meat, marijuana and spirits- rooted in culture and economy.⁵⁹

These economic and cultural ties point to the existence of regional formations that pre-date the establishment and conception of a region by state-markers in southern Africa. Through their actions, therefore, these actors transcend state-centric notions of regionalism. Non-state actors, therefore, also contribute to the definition and organisation of social space and political community taking place in the region. As such, they contribute the constitution of the social reality that give meaning to the notion of region and the regional communities. New approaches to the study of regionalism recognise the importance of regionalist processes from below, as crucial to the definition of regions and the formation of regional communities.

⁵⁶ P. Vale, *Security and Politics in South Africa*, p. 158.

⁵⁷ F. Söderbaum, 'The Dynamics of Security and Development Regionalism in Southern Africa' p.106.

⁵⁸ F. Söderbaum, 'The Dynamics of Security and Development Regionalism in Southern Africa' p.111-112.

⁵⁹ J. Mittelman, 'Globalisation and environmental politics' p. 854.



The search for such a community requires both a higher degree of internal societal participation and the intra-regional participation of non-governmental forces. Such society-induced forms of regionalisation are critical for the building of a trans-regional economy and civil society. Ultimately, new forms of regionalism are thus a pluralist phenomenon that concerns itself with various fields of activity and at various levels. This creates the opportunity for both state and non-state actors to build new regional economic and political capacity.

Regionalism in southern Africa should also, therefore, concern itself with political and social communities, which exist outside or on the fringes of states or who are the subject of exclusion. We, therefore, need to recognise more complex and multi-level modes of governance in which both state and non-state actors play a role. The argument here is that communities beyond the geometry of state sovereignty are finding solutions to pressing problems in transnational structures.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that a new understanding of the notion region and regional community in southern Africa, presupposes an inclusive typology of both state-based and society-based actors. Increasing economic interaction among ordinary southern Africans, especially in the aftermath of apartheid, necessitates a new understanding of the southern African region and regional community. These interactions, coupled with increasing networks among other civil society actors, represent a compelling case for an emerging identity and a community-in-formation that lies beyond the geometry of state sovereignty in SADC.