

# **The European Union foreign policy from pure to complex interregionalism**

## **The case of Latin America and the role of transregionalism**

### **Abstract**

The complex and ever changing international environment has enabled and constrained the European Union foreign policy, allowing it to achieve a number of successes, with the creation of a European External Action Service as one of the most important endeavours. However, a number of contradictions have marked its evolution, some of them being an intrinsic part of an actor with supranational structures, but also intergovernmental institutions, where the Member States have the final decisions, foreign policy being one of the areas where they have an essential role. Yet, the European Union has managed to promote the image of a Global Actor, able to work together with other regional organisations and international entities and in this sense the current paper will look at one of the main tools used for succeeding in this strategy: interregionalism and the way in which it has been adapted in the concrete case of the EU relations with Latin America.

The paper looks at the links between interregionalism and transregionalism and the ways in which the EU foreign policy has been adapting its tools towards a more complex framework combining the region-to-region approach with bilateralism and transregional institutions. Transregionalism plays in this context an essential role in continuing to legitimise the region-to-region perspective.

**Key words:** transregionalism, interregionalism, foreign policy, the European Union, Latin America

## Argument

The EU shift towards a region-to-region approach has been seen as an adapted answer to an international scene with challenges that affect more than one single actor and in which it is more effective to think about common strategies. In the words of Timothy Garton Ash:

‘For its first half century, the European project was mainly about what European did to ourselves. For the next half century, it will mainly be about Europe in a non-European world’ (Rogers, 2009, 831).

Between the tools the EU has used in order to promote the image of a Global Actor, interregionalism has been ‘a true political identity-marker’ (Telò, 2005, 56).

Interregionalism can be defined as ‘a process characterized by the *widening and deepening [of] political, economic, societal [and ideational] interactions between international regions*’ (Roloff, 2001, 20 in Rúlund, 2010, 1271). Following a complementary logic, interregionalism can equally be understood from the perspective of the organisations and institutions coordinating the dialogue of two or more regions at the level of the different sectors of society (Hettne, 2004). This is the approach used in the current paper due to its ability to capture the mechanisms helping to develop the cooperation between regions and to involve relevant actors with a wide variety of backgrounds.

From an empirical point of view, research on interregionalism has been focusing on the European Union as the main international organisation that has established a number of agreements and forums of dialogue with regional actors in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Interregionalism has been seen as a strategy that ‘constitutes a relatively safe space within which Europe can display identity and norm difference from the US. The EU can lay down an identity marker of what it perceives as a more humane governance model in its relations with the developing world [...]. The result is a distinctive model [...] assisted by the development of strong *European* positions on the environment, debt, aid, the deployment of military power, and the nature of human rights’ (Grugel, 2004, 621).

However, the relations within the Triad (the EU, the US and East Asia) have been treated much more extensively than any other interregional dialogue of the EU. There is a need in this sense to extend the agenda and to give priority to other regions that have an advanced dialogue with the European Union, as it is the case of Latin America. For Hardacre and Smith, 'the EU's relations with Latin America are possibly the most extensive and well developed' (Hardacre and Smith, 2014, 94). There is scope in analysing the potential of the interregional strategy of the EU with Latin America, justified also by the extensive institutional dialogue between the two regions, with Eurolat, the EU-CELAC Summits and the EU-LAC Foundation as the main examples.

From a theoretical perspective, interregionalism has been analysed as having five important functions: balancing, institution building, rationalising, agenda setting and collective identity formation (Doidge, 2014, Rúland, 2010). They are presented more extensively in the next section when talking about *Current approaches to interregionalism*, together with the factors conditioning the success of this dialogue, regioness, presence and actorness (Hettne, 2014). Besides extending the empirical agenda and recognising the importance of the interregional dialogue with Latin America, the current research aims also to contribute to the theoretical approach used for analysing interregionalism in the context of the EU-Latin America cooperation. In this sense, it applies the theoretical framework of transregionalism and the idea of creating different spaces of cooperation between the two regions. This analysis is made from the perspective of complex interregionalism, recognising the shift in the EU interregional strategy and the relevance of the bilateral agreements between the EU and different Latin American countries, but the argument is that this strategy is enforcing rather than competing with the region-to-region approach.

Having these empirical and theoretical elements as premises of the analysis, the paper starts by presenting the current approaches to interregionalism and underlines the fact that they are useful in understanding the EU foreign policy, but they cannot explain the shifts that we are witnessing in the last years and in this sense the analysis based on the transregional institutions can hold more explanatory power. The second part concerns the shifts and challenges the EU is facing in its interregional strategy with Latin America and acknowledges the importance of complex interregionalism and transregionalism, as a mechanism based on structures linking the different sectors of society in the two regions.

The third and last part identifies these institutions mediating the dialogue between the EU and Latin America and the way in which they are contributing to the shift in the EU strategy towards a complex interregional framework.

## **Current approaches to interregionalism**

Theoretical approaches have been focusing on the five functions that interregionalism can accomplish: balancing, institutions building, rationalising, agenda setting and collective identity formation (Doidge, 2014, Rúlund, 2010). These functions can be both internal and external, meaning that they have an influence over the way in which the region is developing as a process of internal dialogue and integration, but also over the relations a particular region has with other international actors.

Regarding the balancing function, the internal role is that of 'avoiding possible marginalisation through maximising autonomy and room for manoeuvre in an anarchic/self-help system' (Doidge, 2014, 42). This can be the case of the EU relations with Latin America in the context of the United States project having as objective a Free Trade Area of the Americas. The success of such project would have decreased the EU influence in the region, and as a result the interregional strategy with Latin America needed to be strengthened. The European Union reacted to this project by initiating negotiations for free trade agreements with a number of important actors in the regions, including Central America, the Community of Andean Nations and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). This region-to-region approach was not the first one in the EU foreign policy, having similar dialogues with Asia and Africa, but the innovation was a community based on similar values (democracy, human rights and the rule of law) more than ever before. This received more content through the Summits, at the beginning as EU-LAC dialogue, but recently replaced by the EU-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) cooperation.

As for the external role of balancing, it concerns the way in which a region can influence other actors' behaviour and ensures their honest participation in the international system

(Doidge, 2014). This corresponds to what Doidge terms as 'globally active' actors (Doidge, 2008, 242), changing the multilateral system through their interaction with other regions and establishing a new level of interaction 'in the hierarchy of global governance' (Doidge, 2008, 230).

The institution building function can be seen as 'regionalism through interregionalism' (Hänggi, 2003) since it concerns the ways in which the interregional cooperation constrains the actors 'to coordinate positions prior to the dialogue with their interregional partners. Interregionalism, therefore, directly affects the building of regional structures' (Doidge, 2008, 230). In this way we can see how the 'dynamics of interregional relations drive regional states to strengthen intra-regional cooperation, in particular so among the members of the regional entity which exhibits a lower degree of cohesiveness' (Hänggi, 2003, 199). This is the case of Latin America in its relation with the European Union, and the creation of CELAC can be analysed from this perspective. It is easier to achieve common positions through a forum of dialogue like the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, with a Latin American Parliament and annual Summits held through a system of rotating presidency. In addition, this process benefits from a broad EU support for strengthening regional integration in Latin America:

'[The] support for regional integration is something that distinguishes the EU as an external partner of Latin America and is one of its main assets. It could be said that the EU wants Latin America to *mirror* its own integration experience, but this European support is also based on a broad bi-regional consensus on the essential role of integration and regionalism in peace and security, socio-economic development and the international influence of Latin America' (Sanahuja, 2006:3).

As for the following two functions, rationalising and agenda setting, they are usually analysed together. They concern the ability of interregional negotiations to simplify multilateral negotiations in which it is hard to get concrete results due to the high number of participants (rationalising), and the chance to promote cooperative agendas that can then be translated to a higher level of global cooperation (agenda setting) (Doidge, 2014).

The last function, collective identity formation, concerns the interaction with the 'other' in which a region needs to define and redefine its own characteristics, its own identity.

Interregionalism becomes in this way 'a locus for regularised contact and a venue for socialisation' (Doidge, 2014, 43). In the case of the European Union, interregionalism helped in strengthening the image of a Global Actor able to overcome its internal limits related to the ability of Member States to maintain a degree of decision power. This means that 'the building of the EU's identity as a global actor is closely related to and reinforced by a process of region-building and interregionalism' (Söderbaum et al., 2006, 371) and that interregionalism is

'a result of the ongoing need to forge a common European identity among the people of its constituent nations and by a belief in the utility of regions as a unit for organising the global economy' (Aggarwal and Fogarty, 2004, 14).

Its relation with Latin America has been focusing on the similar values that the two regions share, including democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This has consolidated the identity of both actors on the international arena, bringing legitimacy to their cooperation and creating the conditions for achieving the interregional goals promoted through the different institutions.

All these functions relate to a central concept for interregionalism: actorness. Actorness can be absolute, meaning the ability to achieve common positions and goals in such a way that can modify the outside world (Hettne, 2014). There is also a comparative dimension, in which one of the two regions can achieve a superior level of integration and in this way can be an enabling factor for the weaker region to increase its regioness. It is actually the first condition to make possible interregionalism, a sufficient level of actorness in absolute terms. Regioness is the second condition in order to have a successful dialogue between two regions, and in this sense it is important that both have achieved a certain degree of 'internal cohesion and identity formation' (Hettne, 2014, 57). The third and last condition, the international presence, is determined by their economic and military strength, their diplomacy, and their territory and population size.

'For two regions to establish a functioning relationship, it is essential that both have achieved a certain degree of actorship, that is, a combination of internal cohesion, external presence and organised actorness' (Hettne, 2014, 60).

When talking about foreign policy, both actors are processes that are still developing in order to consolidate their actorness. In terms of regioness, the EU has achieved a higher degree of cohesion and has a superior sense of identity. However, CELAC offers the premises of increasing the regioness of Latin America, thus helping to strengthen its international presence sustained by the evolution of an important number of countries from developing to middle-income actors.

Considering both the functions of interregionalism, and the conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to make possible the region-to-region dialogue, we can see the reasons why this type of dialogue is beneficial for both regions. We can analyse the EU interregional strategy with Latin America from this perspective and the examples given already illustrate how this theoretical framework can be applied to this particular dialogue. Although recognising the importance of such conceptual clarifications, the current research wants to look at interregionalism adding a new layer of analysis, placing agency at the level of the interregional institutions, able to create new spaces of dialogue between the two regions. This would bring more explanatory power in terms of the shift the EU interregional strategy is making in the last years, changes that cannot be explained referring just to the functions or conditions of interregionalism. It would prove how the changes in the EU foreign policy are not affecting the importance given to the region-to-region approach.

In order to place the focus on the interregional institutions, an important step is to update the way in which the European Union has been using interregionalism in the last decade. In this sense, the next section analyses the evolution from traditional interregionalism to complex interregionalism, but also the importance of transregionalism in keeping relevant the interregional strategy towards Latin America.

## **From traditional to complex interregionalism- the role played by transregionalism**

Interregionalism has been traditionally understood as group-to-group relations or bilateral interregionalism. 'Based on a low level of institutionalization, usually at the ministerial, ambassadorial and senior officials' levels, sometimes supplemented by permanent or ad hoc experts' working groups' (Rüland, 2002, 3), this type of interregionalism focuses on specific topics of cooperation like trade, security of environment and there are no common institutions, both sides depend on their own structures in order to succeed in applying concrete strategies. As examples we can use the case of the European Union relations with ASEAN, MERCOSUR or SADC, based on projects discussed within a framework in which there are no interregional institutions and the two actors use the existing ones in applying concrete decisions.

However, this framework has proved to be insufficient for the European Union in its strategy as Global Actor and needed to be updated taking into account the 'competition' between the 'Commission as the instigator of an interregional strategy' (Hardacre and Smith, 2014, 94) and the Council inclined to favour bilateral agreements. As a result, the EU used two different approaches: on one hand, it signed agreements with strategic partners like Brazil or FTAs with countries like Peru and Colombia, but on the other side it developed a deeper institutional framework for the dialogue with the Latin American subcontinent. The creation of Eurolat, the EU-LAC Foundation and the organisation of biannual Summits with CELAC, are all proof that we are not talking about a decreasing role of interregionalism in the EU foreign policy. The EU has adapted its strategy and a new, more flexible approach has taken the place: complex interregionalism. This new concept

'offers an analytical lens through which to understand [...] fluctuations in EU external relations between transregional, pure interregionalism and bilateral relations, and more importantly the reasons behind them' (Hardacre and Smith, 2014, 92).

It manages to explain also the more complicated cooperation with Latin America, and the fact that the EU has signed free trade agreements with Colombia and Peru (2012) instead of



CAN or a strategic partnership with Brazil (2007) instead of MERCOSUR. There have been concerns that this type of dialogue, replacing the traditional interregional dialogue of the EU, 'may ultimately deprive the EU of the foreign policy instrument (group-to-group regional dialogue) with which it has built its international identity and legitimacy as a global actor for some 20 years' (Santander, 2014, 127).

'The EU's interregional strategies as of 2012 thus seem to reflect only a distant echo of the initial idea that the EC and then the Union should seek out partnerships with kindred organisations in other regions, support them and see them as building blocks for a world based on interregional partnerships. [...] one set of reasons for this erosion of the EU model is to be found in the dynamics of complex interregionalism itself—the accretion of new levels of interaction and institutionalisation necessitates a new variety of strategy and a mix of transregional, interregional and bilateral strategies' (Hardacre and Smith, 2014, 98).

Between these two strategies, interregionalism and bilateralism, a new strategy has been designed, linking the importance of a dialogue between regions with a need for a more flexible framework. In the particular case of the EU relation with Latin America, in addition to bilateral agreements with countries like Colombia, Peru or Brazil, and to the dialogue with Central America, CAN and MERCOSUR, there is an increasing importance given to transregional dialogue with CELAC. In order to understand why the EU cooperation with CELAC is transregional rather than interregional, it is important to define this new level of interaction between regions, and to see it in relation to interregionalism, enabling a more flexible strategy rather than a competing one:

'Inter-regionalism is in simple terms about the relationship between two distinct, separate regions, whereas trans-regionalism implies the establishment of common *spaces* between and across regions in which constituent agents (e.g. individuals, communities, organisations) operate and have close associative ties with each other' (Dent, 2003, 224).

Analysed so far in understanding ASEM (the Asia-Europe Meeting), transregionalism has as objective establishing common institutions in order to share best practices, creating frameworks for networking and increasing the degree of socialisation between the two

actors. It includes economic, business, political and socio-cultural spaces (Dent, 2003). In this way, transregionalism can be understood as a more developed form of interregionalism, in which we have as frameworks of interaction the EU-LAC Foundation, Eurolat, the EU-CELAC Summits, but also other forms of dialogue through think tanks, experts and Iberoamerican institutions like SEGIB. Transregionalism is also a more flexible form of dialogue, due to its ability to increase not only the actorness of formal regional organisations, but also that of regional blocs like CELAC, that have not achieved an advanced form of regional dialogue and integration. It 'refers to actors and structures mediating between regions' (Hettne, 2014, 66) and is 'developed while countries in two or more regions are brought together by a trans- or mega-regional identity, or a sense of mega-regional community' (Chen, 2005, 4).

Hence, transregionalism is based not only on state actors, but also on other influences coming from the private or civil society sector (Söderbaum and Langenhove, 2005). In this way, it offers the premises of an approach focusing on agency and on analysing the role played by the different actors in developing new forms of interregionalism. It adds to the macro-networking between countries, the micro-networking between the different communities (policy making, business, civil society) of the two regions and ensures a more in deep dialogue between the two cultures (Dent, 2003). As for the mega-regional identity, the EU relation with Latin America is going to be understood from the perspective of a transatlantic dimension, making it the core of the common or mega-regional community.

Transregionalism is thus completing the EU strategy as a Global Actor. This strategy stands at the intersection of different tools, including in addition pure interregionalism and bilateralism, all being ways of promoting the EU interests, but also an EU identity on the international scene. This identity is still based on the dialogue with other regions, increasing EU actorness and legitimacy, even if it is made through pure interregionalism, through a more flexible transregionalism or through bilateral agreements increasing the possibility of a future region-to-region dialogue. Using the words of Doidge, bilateralism, interregionalism and transregionalism are 'joined at the hip' (Doidge, 2008), creating an EU identity in which the region-to-region strategy continues to play a central role and in which transregionalism is compensating the decline in pure interregionalism and its replacement by bilateralism.

The current paper will look at the institutional framework giving content to the new EU approach. In addition, even if transregionalism has been used to analyse ASEM, there is no research on the way in which the different EU-Latin American institutions are creating the patterns of a transregional dialogue. The way to achieve this is through combining the theoretical elements on complex interregionalism and transregionalism, looking at the different institutional actors consolidating the dialogue between the two regions.

## **The European Union relation with Latin America. Transregional actors**

This part of the paper applies the transregional framework to the EU-Latin America dialogue. It identifies the main actors that are playing an important role or that hold the potential of changing this cooperation. The aim is not to be exhaustive, but rather to look at a series of institutions and agents that are helping in changing and completing the interregional strategy with a transregional one.

The EU-CELAC dialogue is based on the Final Declarations and Action Plans agreed as a result of the biannual Summits. The first one, held in Santiago, in 2013, mentioned a number of topics including science and research, sustainable development, regional integration, migration, social cohesion, gender and the drugs problem. However, the main topic and the subject of the Summit was an Alliance for Sustainable Development to Promote Investments of Social and Environmental Quality, as an essential topic of the strategic partnership between the EU and Latin America. Following the Summit, the main institution taking the initiatives in order to improve this partnership at all levels is the EU-LAC Foundation. It is not only a transregional institution helping the EU in promoting a more flexible region-to-region approach, but also a way of giving voice to the Latin American countries. Between the initiatives building the content of the new discourse on the EU-Latin America cooperation, the four programs, *Explore*, *Venture*, *Connect* and *Communicate* are the main tools and structures promoting an interregional agenda.

As for *Explore*, it 'promotes meeting spaces for dialogue and reflection with key non-governmental actors, in order to enrich and strengthen the intergovernmental process while

searching for quality answers to the challenges faced by societies in both regions’<sup>1</sup>. In this way, it cooperates with experts and academics in understanding future challenges and in writing proposals for the intergovernmental meetings in order to strengthen the interregional cooperation. This type of discourse is leading to another component of the Foundation, the *Connect* program, aiming to be ‘a laboratory of proposals for civil society in both regions’<sup>2</sup>, looking for synergies between the different networks in Europe and Latin America. In this sense, the main parts are the Academic Summit, the Business Summit and Youth networks focused on education and employment. The aim is ‘channelling their proposals into the process of Summit meetings of Heads of State and Government of CELAC-EU’<sup>3</sup>.

The next program, *Venture*, is based on ‘sustainable development, innovation, industrial districts and competitive clusters, corporate social responsibility, trade, finance and professional training as a vehicle for social inclusion and improving the competitiveness of regions and sectors’<sup>4</sup> and seeks to develop the interregional cooperation in the economic sector based on the Santiago Declaration. As for *Communicate*, it ‘gives visibility to the historic relationship maintained by the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean and which is not always perceived in all its importance, dimension and complexity’<sup>5</sup> and helps in promoting the interregional dialogue in the media and other networks.

The four programs are the proof of a new form of interregional cooperation, based on a dialogue at all levels, from the official Santiago Declaration of the government representatives to experts and think tanks (*Explore*), civil society (*Connect*), the economic sector (*Venture*) and the media (*Communicate*). This new discourse is developing a narrative in which complex interregionalism is used to create ‘common spaces between and across regions in which constituent agents (e.g. individuals, communities, organisations) operate and have close associative ties with each other’ (Dent, 2003, 224). The EU-LAC Foundation is leading the way to this new approach in the EU-LAC relations and is becoming independent

---

<sup>1</sup> According to <http://eulacfoundation.org/en/explore>

<sup>2</sup> According to <http://eulacfoundation.org/en/connect>

<sup>3</sup> According to <http://eulacfoundation.org/en/connect>

<sup>4</sup> According to <http://eulacfoundation.org/en/venture>

<sup>5</sup> According to <http://eulacfoundation.org/en/communicate>

from the governments which initially invested it with agency in the interregional dialogue between the EU and Latin America.

Eurolat is the second actor with a transregional power in this type of cooperation. It creates a space of dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy, able to talk about topics that would be too sensitive for the EU-CELAC Summits<sup>6</sup>. These topics include transparency and corruption (Athens, 2014), and citizens participation and democracy (Santiago and Vilnius, 2013). This type of subjects proves an approach able to integrate wider sectors of the two regions and the influence of civil society, using the EU-LAC Foundation as appropriate interlocutor, able to channel their concerns to the parliamentary level represented by Eurolat, as a counterbalance to the EU-CELAC Summits.

There are a number of other institutions and actors that even if not created for the specific purpose of serving the EU-Latin America cooperation, are playing an important role in the new region-to-region approach. The European External Action Service, as part of the Summits process, is very relevant in this sense. In addition, the European Commission through the trade and development policy is helping in consolidating the dialogue. The tools for achieving this include programs like EUROsociAL, Urb-AL, AI-Invest for social cohesion, EURO-SOLAR and EUROCLIMA for sustainable development and climate change, and ALFA or Erasmus Mundus for higher education and research.

In the Communication to the Parliament and the Council, the European Commission considers as the EU main objectives to ‘promote regional integration and negotiations to establish Association Agreements with sub-regions in Latin America [and] steer development cooperation towards the reduction of poverty and social inequality and improve educational levels’ (Commission, 2009, 2). However, this is completed by the idea that the EU should ‘strengthen bilateral relations with individual countries to complement EU support for regional groupings’ (Commission, 2009, 8), underlining the importance of complex interregionalism in the European Union foreign policy. This helps in understanding how this discourse is changing the EU interregional strategy. It seems that the new narrative recognises transregionalism as a way of maintaining the EU support for regional integration,

---

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Marc Jutten, Policy Advisor, President’s Cabinet, the European Parliament, October 2014

but through a more adapted tool, including bilateralism in order to keep relevant the European Union as a Global Actor.

Other actors promoting these ideas are experts working for institutions like FLACSO (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences) or the Spanish Agency for Cooperation and Development (AECID). In this framework, for Antonio Sanahuja, there are a number of challenges for the EU-CELAC cooperation, but there are also incentives for developing this dialogue. They are mainly related to an identity based on similar values of democracy and human rights, but also to functional or pragmatic reasons related to trade interests and cosmopolite perspectives on multilateralism (Sanahuja, 2013).

In addition to mapping these actors with a transregional influence and seeing that they link different sectors of the two societies, it is important to understand the other dimension of the EU-CELAC cooperation: the need of a trans- or mega-regional identity. In this sense, the EU dialogue with Latin America is seen from the perspective of a broader transatlantic partnership. The actors helping in framing this image can also be included between the institutions with an essential role for the transregional dialogue. The European Parliament can be seen as having the most important influence. It has adopted relevant motions before the Madrid Summit in 2010 and after the Santiago Summit in 2013. The EP statement 'proposes that a biregional political dialogue be opened with new triangular approaches on issues, spheres and matters of common interest embracing EU-LAC-US, with a view to moving towards a Euro-Atlantic area comprising the US, Latin America and the EU' (Parliament, 2010, 9). In 2013, the European Parliament

'Call[ed] on both partners to study areas and frameworks through which broader transatlantic cooperation could be carried out in a pragmatic way, and to explore with other Atlantic countries the usefulness of this extended cooperation; underlines that possible areas from the EU's point of view include economic and social issues, global governance, the process of democratisation, human rights, development cooperation, climate change, security and energy; calls on the partners to analyse the possibility of making use, for the purpose of these triangular dialogues, of the regional and subregional structures created in Latin America which the EU has traditionally encouraged' (Parliament, 2013).

Once again the EU claims through its Parliament the support for regional initiatives in Latin America, but the approach is a transregional one when referring to a 'broader transatlantic cooperation' and including the US as a partner in this framework. It also proves the shift from the traditional interregionalism, in which negotiating with one country could only be included in the hybrid or quasi interregional strategies (Aggarwal and Fogarty, 2004).

A similar perspective can be encountered in the SEGIB seminars<sup>7</sup>, organised with the support of think tanks like the Royal Institute Elcano and FRIDE. In this framework, a number of topics are proposed as suitable for triangular cooperation. The fields in which this triangular cooperation could be an appropriate answer to transnational challenges include: dealing with international migration, with the drugs problem, promoting democracy, security and defence, development aid (Ortiz and Gratius, 2012), but also balancing the power of third actors like China, using trade cooperation through an extended TTIP. These fields seem of particular interest since they are global problems and need to be dealt with global answers.

Using the same discourse, the Atlantic Council thinks that the transatlantic dialogue should be based on building a stronger trilateral marketplace, create human capital, manage energy and natural resources, address transnational crime and public security and strengthen the trilateral institutional framework.

'The United States, European Union, and Latin America should initiate a summit process to herald a new era in relations and to discuss steps to build a more strategic partnership. Building on the Summit of the Americas and the EU-CELAC summit, governments can meet at expert level to define key issues and use ministerial meetings to create commitment among governments and other stakeholder' (Council, 2013:6).

These actors help the EU and Latin America in finding a mega-regional identity and being part of the transatlantic community together with the United States holds symbolic power. This identity is however far from being uncontroversial. In this sense, Susanne Gratius and

---

<sup>7</sup> SEGIB has organised two seminars, in 2012 and 2014, one on how to understand the cooperation between the three actors in the different sectors and the other one on the challenges for Latin America in the context of the TTIP negotiations.

Antonio Sanahuja speak about the cooperation within such frameworks like the OEA, the Transatlantic Summit or the EU-CELAC Summits, bringing together always two of the three actors, but never finding a common forum for all of them (Gratius, 2014, Sanahuja, 2014). In addition, a number of Latin American countries are still outside the transatlantic cooperation framework and the most important example is Brazil, the biggest regional power in South America that has no trade agreement with the EU and the USA. The Latin American integration process itself is defined as *light* regionalism, since there are still important steps to be made in order to achieve integration in important fields like foreign policy and security (FLACSO, 2014). Another important argument is that far from building a transatlantic identity in contrast to the *other*, it seems that the *other* has been inside this 'community', with both Latin America and the EU trying to cooperate in order to balance the US power (Sanahuja, 2014). These elements contesting the existence of a broader transatlantic partnership prove that the EU-Latin America transregionalism is a tool in the process of being consolidated.

## Conclusions

The EU foreign policy has been using different interregional strategies in order to promote the image of a Global Actor, able to react in an effective way and build institutions for the dialogue between regions. However, internal and external factors have favoured the shift towards a complex interregionalism, in which the region-to-region strategy is being completed and reinforced by bilateralism and transregionalism. We have on the internal side the competition between the Commission, supported by the Parliament in strengthening the interregional strategy, and the Council, being more inclined to bilateralism. Between these two strategies, we have transregionalism that seems to be a more flexible, institutionalised way of dealing with the dialogue between two equal regions, idea supported also by the existence of transregional institutions (Aggarwal and Fogarty, 2004).



In addition to the internal factors enabling the change, we have in the particular case of the EU-Latin America relation a series of external factors making complex interregionalism a more realistic and efficient tool. After the failure of the FTAA project, the USA started bilateral negotiations with a number of states, here included Peru and Colombia. Even if the European Union had for a long period a dialogue with the Community of Andean Nations, in 2009 this strategy was split in two parts: the political and cooperation part continues to be the object of the region-to-region negotiations, while for trade, bilateral negotiations have been concluded with Peru and Colombia, and recently with Ecuador. For Central America there is an agreement with the whole region, while with MERCOSUR the negotiations are still ongoing, having however signed a strategic partnership with Brazil since 2007, but without a trade component.

We can add to this complex reality the increasing importance of transregionalism, with CELAC as the main interlocutor of the EU and the creation of interregional institutions as the tools for deepening the dialogue. Hence, it becomes clear that the traditional analysis of interregionalism, based on its five functions or the conditions to make possible the dialogue, is no longer self-sufficient in explaining the EU foreign policy. In this sense, the theoretical approach proposed here sees agency as a core concept in looking at the actors that are changing the discourses on the EU interregional strategy. This means looking at the institutions that are configuring the transregional space of dialogue at the different levels of the two regions from government representatives to civil society, and at a nascent transatlantic identity accomplishing the role of a mega-community.

## Bibliography

- AGGARWAL, V. K. & FOGARTY, E. A. 2004. *EU Trade Strategies. Between Regionalism and Globalism*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- CHEN, Z. 2005. 'NATO, APEC and ASEM: triadic interregionalism and global order'. *AEJ*, 1-18.
- COMMISSION, E. 2009. *The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership*. Brussels.
- COUNCIL, A. 2013. *The Trilateral Bond: Mapping a New Era for Latin America, the United States, and Europe*. Washington: Atlantic Council/ the Transatlantic Task Force on Latin America.
- DENT, C. M. 2003. 'From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM'. *Asia Europe Journal*, 1, 223-235.
- DOIDGE, M. 2008. 'Joined at the hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism'. *Journal of European Integration*, 29, 229-248.
- DOIDGE, M. 2014. 'Interregionalism and the European Union: Conceptualising Group-to-Group Relations'. In: BAERT, F., SCARAMAGLI, T. & SÖDERBAUM, F. (eds.) *Intersecting Interregionalism. Regions, Global Governance and the EU*. London: Springer.
- FLACSO 2014. *Las Américas y la Unión Europea ante los nuevos escenarios en las relaciones comerciales y políticas*, San José, Perspectiva Digital S.A.
- GRATIUS, S. 2014. 'Comentarios finales'. In: FLACSO (ed.) *Las Américas y la Unión Europea ante los nuevos escenarios en las relaciones comerciales y políticas*. San José: Perspectiva Digital S.A.
- GRUGEL, J. B. 2004. 'New Regionalism and Modes of Governance — Comparing US and EU Strategies in Latin America'. *European Journal of International Relations*, 10, 603-626.
- HÄNGGI, H. 2003. 'Regionalism through interregionalism: East Asia and ASEM'. In: LIU, F. K. & RÉGNIER, P. (eds.) *Regionalism in East Asia: Paradigm shifting?* London: Routledge.
- HARDACRE, A. & SMITH, M. 2014. 'The European Union and the Contradictions of Complex Interregionalism'. In: BAERT, F., SCARAMAGLI, T. & SÖDERBAUM, F. (eds.) *Intersecting Interregionalism. Regions, Global Governance and the EU*. London: Springer.
- HETTNE, B. September 9-11 2004. RE: 'Interregionalism and World Order'. Type to STATES, R. A. R. W. O.
- HETTNE, B. 2014. 'Regional Actorship: A Comparative Approach to Interregionalism'. In: BAERT, F., SCARAMAGLI, T. & SÖDERBAUM, F. (eds.) *Intersecting Interregionalism. Regions, Global Governance and the EU*. London: Springer.
- ORTIZ, M. S. & GRATIUS, S. E. 2012. *Europa y las Américas ¿Por fin un triángulo Atlántico?*, Cáceres, Fundación Academia Europea de Yuste.
- PARLIAMENT, E. 2010. *The EU strategy for the relations with Latin America. 2009/2213(INI)*. Brussels.
- PARLIAMENT, E. 2013. *A broader Transatlantic partnership. A7-0173/2013*.
- ROGERS, J. 2009. 'From 'Civilian Power' to 'Global Power': Explicating the European Union's 'Grand Strategy' Through the Articulation of Discourse Theory'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 47, 831-862.
- RÜLAND, J. 2002. 'Inter- and Transregionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda'. *Workshop on Asia-Pacific Studies in Australia and Europe: A Research Agenda for the Future*. Australian National University: National Europe Centre.
- RÜLAND, J. 2010. 'Balances, multilateral utilities or regional identity builders? International Relations and the study of interregionalism'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17, 1271-1283.
- SANAHUJA, A. J. 2006. *Towards a genuine multilateralism in external relations between the European Union and Latin America*. Brussels: European Parliament.

- SANAHUJA, A. J. 2013. 'La Unión Europea y CELAC: Balance, perspectivas y opciones de la relación birregional'. In: BONILLA SORIA, A. & ALVAREZ ECHANDI, I. (eds.) *Desafíos estratégicos del regionalismo contemporáneo: CELAC e Iberoamérica*. San José: FLACSO.
- SANAHUJA, A. J. 2014. 'Conciertos y desconciertos en el triángulo atlántico'. In: FLACSO (ed.) *Las Américas y la Unión Europea ante los nuevos escenarios en las relaciones comerciales y políticas*. San José: Perspectiva Digital S.A.
- SANTANDER, S. 2014. 'The Impact of the Iberian States on European Union- Latin American Interregionalism'. In: BAERT, F., SCARAMAGLI, T. & SÖDERBAUM, F. (eds.) *Intersecting Interregionalism. Regions, Global Governance and the EU*. London: Springer.
- SÖDERBAUM, F. & LANGENHOVE, L. V. 2005. 'Introduction: The EU as a Global Actor and the role of Interregionalism'. *Journal of European Integration*, 27, 249-262.
- SÖDERBAUM, F., STALGREN, P. & LANGENHOVE, L. V. 2006. 'The EU as a Global Actor and the Dynamics of Interregionalism: a Comparative Analysis'. *Journal of European Integration*, 27, 365-380.
- TELÒ, M. 2005. *Europe: a civilian power? European union, global governance, world order*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.