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Regional Integration in Contemporary Africa

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Abstract

It is often said that regional integration would bring greater strength and bargaining power to African countries. But as this paper shows, progress in this area has been relatively limited, and Africa is still one of the most expensive places in the world to do business. The objective of this paper is to discuss the social, economic and political factors that explain the gap between regional integration as an institutional project (regionalism) and regional integration as an everyday reality (regionalization). After a short discussion on the scales and nature of integration, the second part of the paper reviews the literature and discusses the historical roots and contemporary activities of the institutions created to promote regional integration on the continent. The third part discusses the policy implications of the limited achievements of regional integration institutions, while the conclusion stresses the need for an African model of integration.

Keywords: Africa, Integration, Regional Institutions, Regionalism, Regionalization, Regional Integration

Introduction

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded in Addis Ababa more than fifty years ago. Several regional organizations have been established with great fanfare over the last half-century to promote integration amongst newly independent African states. Despite the numerous charters signed, numerous meetings convened, and countless strategic frameworks drafted on paper, progress toward meaningful regional integration on the continent has been slow.

Inter-state agreements intended to ensure free movement of goods have had little impact on business operators, who continue to rely on informal negotiations with state authorities to cross national borders, contributing to Africa's status as one of the most expensive places to do business in the world (OECD, 2009a; AfDB, 2015). Regional integration also suffers from a partial elimination of tariff barriers, a lack of coordination amongst development frameworks, and varied macroeconomic policies on a continent divided into 54 nations — three variables that tend to amplify the negative impact of market fragmentation (World Bank, 2012). People's mobility within and across regional blocs is another area where regional integration has fallen short, sometimes due to a lack of political will. In spite of protocols signed at the highest level, customs hassles are still a fact of life for migrants and travellers who make their way across the continent.

The absence of tangible achievements in previous regional initiatives does not appear to be deterring African leaders from attending regional summits and signing treaties. It also does not appear to diminish the enthusiasm of politicians and scientists. Regional integration is still a hot topic among economists, political scientists, geographers, and other social scientists, and it has always sparked heated discussions between policymakers and academics. Many of the disagreements have been fueled by the lack of a solid consensus on what 'regional' and 'integration' really mean, obscuring its geographical *scale* and functional or institutional *nature*.

The goal of this paper is to examine the social, economic, and political elements that contribute to the disparity between regional integration as an institutional effort (*regionalism*) and regional integration as a daily reality (*regionalization*). The second part of the paper explores the literature and discusses the historical roots and current operations of the organizations formed to foster regional integration on the continent after a brief discussion of the sizes and nature of integration. The third section addresses the policy implications of regional integration institutions' limited results, while the conclusion emphasizes the necessity for an African integration paradigm.

Scales and Nature of Regional Integration

The 'regional' level, according to many political scientists and economists, refers to supranational institutions on a continental or subcontinental scale. The African continent is frequently thought of as a macro-region separated into subregions such as southern, central, and western Africa (UN, 2015). Regional blocs such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECWAS) have preferred scales in subcontinental regions (ECOWAS).

In regional science and geography, the term 'regional' also refers to administrative subdivisions between states and local governments, as well as functional areas where social and economic contacts are highly developed, potentially across boundaries. Based on the existence of border marketplaces, 19 such prospective cross-border functional zones have recently been discovered in West Africa (OECD, 2014). To make matters even more complicated, many scholars today regard regions as social and historical creations with a territorial and symbolic shape, a number of institutions, and a well-established identity rooted in social activities (Paasi, 2021). The Dogon Country in Mali is a good example of a region that encompasses a (rather) homogeneous linguistic and ethnic group with a long history of resistance against enslaving states. Such regions approximate what political scientists have defined as micro-regions, i.e. entities that ‘exist between the “national” and the “local” level’ and can be subnational or cross-border (Söderbaum and Taylor, 2018: 13).

Another uncertainty in the concept of regional integration is that its nature is perceived differently depending on whether institutional or functional players are the focus. Regionalism is a set of voluntary agreements between governments and other public and private organizations aimed at mitigating the negative effects of national segmentation and promoting political and economic cooperation across nations. The main goal for Africa is to build a continental single market by 2025, as envisioned in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, also known as the Abuja Treaty (OAU, 1991). African states are all, to varying degrees, institutionally integrated in various regional bodies such as the African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) or the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). This institutional process is also known as *institutional*, *formal* regionalism (Söderbaum, 2017) or *policy-driven* integration (Perkmann, 2017) because it mainly involves the state and the conduct of political and policy affairs.

Regionalization refers to the social and economic interactions that develop over time and space between persons and businesses, resulting in the formation of functional regions. Due to the strong exchanges between small traders and long-distance merchants, several micro-regions in Africa have attained an unprecedented level of functional integration. Border markets' rapid rise (Dobler, 2016) demonstrates how regional integration can be facilitated by the activities of a professional community of traders who skillfully exploit border differentials. To distinguish it from the formal process of forming supranational institutions, regionalization is frequently referred to as *functional*, *informal*, or *market-driven* integration in the contemporary literature.

Key Themes *Moving Beyond Disciplinary Lines*

Regional integration experts' disciplinary lines have proven to be nearly as resistant to change as African international borders. There was little interaction between policy methods focusing on formal inter-state frameworks at the macro level and

African studies literature focusing on functional relationships at the micro level until the late 1980s. The policy approach, which has been backed by international financial institutions, has long emphasized the institutional principles and theoretical benefits of regional integration (World Bank, 1989). State-centric and influenced by the European experience, this strand of literature could not have been further from the daily realities of African traders, migrants and entrepreneurs that were documented by the African studies approach (MacGaffey, 1987; Igué, 1989), which gave priority to microanalysis that showed how regional integration took place from below.

It wasn't until the late 1990s that the gap between normative and empirical literature on African regional integration began to close. Due to the collapse of many one-party regimes and growing market liberalization, this time saw a return of regionalism, which favored intergovernmental agreements (Hanson, 2015). The new regionalism literature (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998; Bs, 2001; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2008; Söderbaum and Taylor, 2018; Shaw et al., 2021) made an important contribution towards a more comprehensive understanding of regional integration that combines regionalism and regionalization by building on a conceptual framework inspired by international political economy and a number of detailed case studies taken from various regions of Africa. This literature emphasized that regional integration resulted from the interdependencies between various geographical scales, which could no longer be considered as autonomous levels. The development of markets and transport corridors in certain micro-regions, for example, reflects the unequal state of liberalization of the continent at the macro level, which in turn provides incentives to traders to exploit disparities between trade policies (Nixdorf, 2013).

Another important contribution to the study of region-building in Africa has been made by the border studies literature, whose interdisciplinary approach to borderlands and borderlanders has documented how regions were built from below (Asiwaju and Adeniyi, 1989; Nugent and Asiwaju, 1996; Feyissa and Hoehne, 2010; Hüsken and Klute, 2010; Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013; Miles, 2019). Border scholars have highlighted the vitality of social ties, political patronage and trade networks that exploit colonial partitioning and contribute to regionalization in the so-called national peripheries, often in contradiction with the institutional initiatives developed by states and regional organizations (Meagher, 2003; Nugent, 2008; Titeca and de Herdt, 2010; Nugent, 2012; Walther, 2015; Zeller, 2020). This literature has demonstrated that the analytical distinction between regionalism and regionalization has become increasingly blurred in Africa. Contemporary African bureaucracies are mixed with patronage and clientelism, and tend to support regional initiatives that benefit state elites and their allies (Gibb, 2019). Such networks of governance cut across public and private spheres and lead elites to pursue their own interests rather than the public good or a pan-Africanist vision (Raeymakers, 2014; Reyntjens, 2014). As shown by Bach (1999, 2016), a general understanding of the failures of regional integration can only be achieved if one considers *regionalism* and *regionalization* simultaneously, because the process of building new regions in Africa results from relationships between the state and society that are constantly recombined.

Historical Roots and Current Regional Institutions

In Africa, the concept of decreasing regional inequities is not new. Since the end of the nineteenth century, European powers have aggressively promoted the formation of federations in order to lower the expense of colonial administration or, in the case of East Africa, to strengthen the hold of white settlers over their local surroundings. French West Africa (AOF) was a federation of eight colonies that stretched from Senegal to Niger and was founded in 1895. Its equivalent was French Equatorial Africa (AEF), a federation of five colonial provinces that spanned the Sahara to the Congo River and was created in 1910. The two federations were dismantled in 1958, but the CFA franc common currency survived. Further south, the British established the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) between South Africa and today's Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. The SACU eventually led to the oldest working customs union worldwide (Erasmus, 2014). The British also set up the short-lived Central African Federation (1953–1963) between the colony of Southern Rhodesia and the protectorates of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Butler, 2010).

The political leaders of the 1960s regarded this colonial background as both a legacy and a restriction (Makinda et al., 2016). On the one hand, with the emergence of a slew of new countries, the demand for regional institutions capable of mitigating the negative impacts of geographical partition has never been greater. Several new states were landlocked and reliant on road and port infrastructure situated thousands of kilometers distant in another country. Other states possessed sea access but were either too small or too isolated from their neighbors due to decades of colonial policy to create a sustainable national economy. Many of the new African leaders, on the other hand, were "reluctant, if not completely unwilling," to adopt policies that would limit state sovereignty and, as a result, their influence (Bach, 1999: 43). While leaders of the Casablanca Group, led by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Guinea's Sékou Touré, and Egypt's Gamal Abdel-Nasser, supported a pan-African political union, other leaders from the Monrovia Group, mostly from French colonies, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, supported sovereignty, non-interference between states, and the principle of inviolability of borders as they existed upon independence, which forms one of the OAU's founding principles (Khadiagala, 2018; Murithi, 2020).

As regards economic integration, while pan-Africanists called for continental unity, the Monrovia Group called for the creation of regional institutions as building blocks for African unity. Eight such regional blocs have been created between 1967 and 1998, and in the years following the Abuja Treaty in 1991 have been officially recognized as regional economic communities (RECs) by the African Union. RECs have achieved various *free trade areas* degrees of integration: such as COMESA were established to further reduce trade barriers; *customs unions*, such as the East African Community (EAC) and SACU (Drummond *et al.*, 2015), add another layer of integration by introducing a common external tariff on the external borders of the regional bloc; *common markets* further extend free trade areas by allowing services, capital and labour to circulate freely across countries; and *customs and monetary unions* guarantee a common external tariff and a single currency. In Africa, customs and monetary unions are subsets of larger regional bodies. Eight ECOWAS members formed the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) following the devaluation of the West African CFA franc (XOF) in 1994 (Seck, 2013; Bossuyt, 2015). The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) is also a grouping of six ECCAS countries using the Central African CFA franc (XAF) (Nono, 2014). In South Africa, SACU comprises five SADC countries, four of which base their currencies on the South African rand within a Common Monetary Area (CMA) (Lorenz and Cornelissen, 2018).

Other subregional groups are not officially recognized by the African Union, although they play an essential role in environmental issues (World Bank, 1994). Some of them are solely concerned with the development of water resources inside the boundaries of the major continental river basins. Since the mid-1960s, numerous countries in West Africa have led the way in establishing such organizations, including the Niger Basin Authority, the Senegal River Basin Development Authority, the Mano River Union, and the Gambia River Basin Organization (OECD, 2009c). Similar organizations were created in southern

Africa with the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, the Zambezi River Authority and the Komati Basin Water Authority (Söderbaum and Granit, 2014). Other organizations aim at covering a broader range of activities, including agriculture, infrastructure, fisheries and natural resources, such as the Lake Chad Basin Development Authority, created to improve land and water management, preserve ecosystems and promote peace-building and security, or the Kagera Basin Organization, which was supposed to reduce poverty and improve socio-economic development in the Great Lakes region. Environmental concerns also drove the establishment of the Integrated Development Authority of the Liptako-Gourma region, which brings together three landlocked Sahelian countries with similar problems of land degradation and water supply, as well as the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), which was established in the aftermath of the first great droughts of the 1970s to promote food security, develop renewable energies, and combat deforestation (OECD, 2016).

Main Current Activities

The overall objective of promoting regional integration in Africa is translated into several policies that aim at improving both hard and soft infrastructure (OECD, 2009a; AfDB, 2012a; World Bank, 2013). Policies promoting hard infrastructure aim to extend and rehabilitate the physical network of roads, railways, ports, airports, satellites, mobile phones and fibre optic cables (Deen-Swarray *et al.*, 2014). Also known as *network-enhancing policies*, these policies improve both the internal connectivity of economic actors at the local level and their external connectivity with the rest of the world. The Trans-African Highway Network envisioned by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank's Aid for Trade Trust Fund, for example, plans to develop the roads connecting the major urban centres of the continent, and hence reduce transport costs. In many parts of Africa, transport corridors are presented as successful examples of public–private partnerships (Teravaninthorn and Raballand, 2019). The best-documented example is probably the Maputo Corridor (Taylor, 2011; Bowland and Otto, 2012; Sequeira *et al.*, 2014; Hanson, 2021), which connects the Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces in South Africa with the capital city of Mozambique, but other examples can be found in other parts of southern and West Africa (AfDB *et al.*, 2015).

Several regional groupings also aim to establish one-stop border posts (OSBPs) to accelerate border clearance (AfDB, 2012b). No less than 51 OSBPs are currently planned, in construction or already operational in Africa, 39 of which are included within the framework of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) in charge of the strategic vision for the development of regional and continental infrastructure. Most of these are located along the Gulf of Guinea and on the borders of landlocked countries (AU *et al*., 2011). In West Africa, OSBPs are mushrooming between Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Togo under the supervision of ECOWAS and UEMOA and with the support of the European Development Fund. Between Niger and Benin, the recent OSBP of Malanville should facilitate the daily operations of petty traders and long-distance merchants, who used to stop twice on the bridge spanning the Niger River. There has also been a rapid development of OSBPs in eastern Africa since the end of the 2000s, facilitated by the adoption of the EAC One-Stop Border Posts Bill in May 2010. As well as making cross-border trade easier, border posts are supposed to reduce corruption between state authorities, companies and private actors, and help to formalize informal trade.

Policies targeting soft infrastructure aim to strengthen the institutions that underpin regional development. Also known as *growth-enhancing policies*, these policies aim to improve the qualifications of the local workforce, supporting existing entrepreneurs and creating the institutional conditions for the development of new economic activities (Walther, 2015). A crucial aspect of such policies is the improvement of the body of rules and regulations governing regional trade, which are currently seen as an obstacle to regional integration. ECOWAS's Regulatory Informal Trade Programme, for example, aims to incorporate current business practices that circumvent state regulations by simplifying administrative, tax and customs procedures, and encouraging traders to register their businesses. UEMOA, USAID and ECOWAS have also established a programme to eliminate corruption and illegal payments at border posts and along trade routes (USAID, 2014). Another aspect related to growth-enhancing policies is to promote informal trade activities, now regarded as 'the most efficient, organized and deep-rooted system of trade in the region' (AfDB, 2012a: 9). Long considered as speculators, African traders are increasingly seen by international financial institutions, regional organizations and aid agencies as crucial actors for alleviating poverty due to their ability to allocate supplies during food crises and provide employment opportunities for poor households (CILSS, 2014).

Thus far, most regional policies have promoted certain sectors (industry, livestock) or certain categories of population (the poor) without necessarily taking into account the spatial dimension of regional development. As a consequence, regional disparities have remained largely unaddressed, despite their crucial role in hindering inclusive growth (AfDB *et al.*, 2015). Development is, however, a rather unequal process, and the idea is gaining momentum within the academic and policy communities that more attention should be paid to the local circumstances in which regional integration occurs. Place-based policies, many argue, could enhance the economic potential and competitive advantage of regions (Barca *et al.*, 2012). Unlike spatially blind policies that apply without explicit consideration to space, place-based policies are based on the idea that local actors and institutions can be mobilized to foster regional development (OECD, 2009b). While most regional policies tend to rely on sectoral, top-down and subsidy-based interventions, place-based policies promote spatial inclusion by encouraging infrastructure and public goods adapted to the specific challenges of each region. Densely populated cross-border regions, such as between Niger and northern Nigeria, for example, will have different needs than regions with low population densities, while coastal and industrialized regions, such as Lagos, will require policies that are of little use in regions dominated by agriculture. Place-based policies could also support cooperation between infra-national authorities that share similar interests or constraints. Until now, African regions and municipalities are still marginally involved in cross-border cooperation due to the relative ineffectiveness of decentralization policies that have rarely deconcentrated power and resources to newly created public authorities.

Implications

Disappointing Outcomes

In general, regional integration in Africa has achieved the highest goals when institutions have focused on very particular sectors, have received substantial funding from external donors and member states, and have brought together nations with similar currencies. CILSS, for example, has tackled some of the Sahelian region's most pressing issues (food security, natural resources) with a regional focus, relying on sectoral collaboration between (mostly) francophone countries (CILSS, 2014). The success of SACU and the Franc Zone also shows that a high level of regional integration may be reached amongst countries that had formal agreements in place even before decolonization.

Elsewhere in Africa, the progress made by regional organizations has been rather limited since the 1960s (AU, 2009, 2013; UNECA *et al.*, 2010, 2012, 2013). This is particularly evident when one compares the objectives of the Abuja Treaty with its current achievements. Coming into force in 1994, the Abuja Treaty envisioned the gradual establishment of the African Economic Community in six stages until 2034 at the latest. The first stage (1994–1999), which establishes economic communities in regions where these do not exist, was completed with a few exceptions. The second stage (1999–2007), which should have removed intra-regional barriers within RECs and harmonized customs duties in relation to third states, has recorded progress, but is not completed. The third stage (2007–2017), in which each regional economic community would establish a free trade area and a customs union, is far from complete. It is unknown whether the next stages, which should ultimately lead to a pan-African economic and monetary union, central bank and currency, will ever be attained.

Regional organizations have also marginally contributed to increased intra-regional trade, which represents approximately 12 per cent of total trade flows in sub-Saharan Africa (AfDB *et al.*, 2015). This share is well below the levels of other regions in the world, where intra-regional trade can represent up to 66 per cent of total trade, as in Europe. In some parts of the continent, as in southern Africa, intra-regional trade is actually declining, and only represented 15 per cent of total trade in 2008 against 22 per cent in 2002 (Mbekeani, 2013). Regional policies frequently refer to these figures, which are based on official data, to encourage additional efforts to strengthen regional integration. However, much of African trade is not recorded by official figures, and adding informal cross-border trade to existing official figures could lead to a significant re-evaluation of the share of intra-regional trade in sub-Saharan Africa. According to recent estimates, unrecorded cross-border trade could represent from 30 to 40 per cent of total trade in the SADC to more than 75 per cent in such countries as Benin or Uganda (UNCTAD, 2013). At the continental level, the real proportion of intra-African trade is probably similar to what is observed in Latin America or the Caribbean (20 per cent).

Shared Responsibilities

One of the most common complaints of African region-building is the disconnect between how supranational authorities formulate regional policies and how these policies are implemented on the ground. Most regional organizations have been unable to enforce the implementation of inter-state agreements and turn them into drivers for structural change in African regions and countries. There is a mismatch between regionalism as it should be and regionalization as it is experienced on a daily basis, according to Bach (2016). However, blaming supranational institutions

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alone for Africa's dismal results and delayed regional integration process would be inaccurate. Nation states and private actors also share part of the responsibility for the lack of practical implementation of integration policies on the continent.

First, many countries have few incentives to participate in efficient institutional integration with their neighbors. Regional initiatives often go against the interests of the state and its customers in the private sector, for whom boundaries are a resource rather than a constraint, in a patrimonial system that encourages interpersonal links throughout society and the state (Walther, 2012, 2015). As a result, regional agreements remain on paper, not only because the government is unable to implement them in practice, but also because they pose a threat to informal arrangements. Bach’s comment, formulated more than 15 years ago, that ‘trans-state integration is stimulated by market distortion, not trade liberalization’ (Bach, 1999: 13), is still true today. In Nigeria, for example, the persistence of informal trade and the reluctance of the government to fully liberalize the market and reform customs have less to do with the protection of national industries than with the profits generated by illegal re-export trade (Raballand and Mjekiqi, 2010; Golub, 2020). In Benin, the existence of national border differentials has long been a guarantee of state and private revenues because most of what is imported from the world markets is ultimately destined to be sold informally to neighbouring countries (Igué and Soulé, 2018).

Second, due to the vast number of organizations with similar or competing goals, regional integration has a poor track record. Almost all African countries are members of many regional groups, resulting in high coordination costs, policy competition, and donor misunderstanding (Dirar, 2010; Tavares and Tang, 2011). Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Sierra Leone are among five groups of countries. COMESA, SADC, SACU, and EAC overlapping affiliations are notably common in East and Southern Africa (Adebola, 2020). The proliferation of regional institutions with overlapping responsibilities is seen by many African leaders as an opportunity for consolidating state power (Herbst, 2007). African regional organizations provide fertile ground for paradiplomacy at the global level, and are actively used by political elites to promote national interests within international financial institutions, the European Union and Western donors. Limiting the number of regional organizations would also mean limiting the opportunities for African leaders to reach potentially important sources of revenue and political support.

Third, political crises and conflicts have had a significant impact on regional integration. While the frequency of worldwide conflicts has decreased since the conclusion of the Cold War, political violence in Africa has increased since the 1990s, as many one-party governments have lost their external support. As a result, a number of regional groups have discontinued operations for the time being. Because of the First Congo War, the Economic Community of Great Lake Countries (CEPGL) was suspended in 1996 and subsequently reactivated in 2010. On a more local level, the Mano River Union (MRU) was inactive for a long time due to the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone before reactivating in 2004. The Liberian Civil War inspired the establishment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was later deployed in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau (Adejumobi, 2016). Conflicts in Somalia and Sudan have recently hampered the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) efforts toward regional integration in eastern Africa. The ongoing antagonism between Morocco and Algeria over the status of Western Sahara has hindered regional integration in the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) in the northern part of the continent. The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) created by the late Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, whose generous contributions financed by petrodollars had led the regional group to swell to 28 countries, was also put to a standstill by the Libyan crisis.

Conclusion

There is no such thing as a perfect match between institutional and functional requirements anywhere on the planet, but the mismatch between *regionalism* and *regionalization* is particularly acute in Africa. This is due to a number of variables, including clientelist accumulation techniques that favor informal over formal arrangements, overlapping tasks across regional entities, and periodic political turmoil and conflicts.

Regional economic policies have so far been dominated by patterns of thought and action in which the state's job is to ensure that free trade rules are followed. Because Africa is fragmented into so many countries, regional policies urge that commerce should be facilitated and regulations should be implemented to ensure that business is performed without friction. Africa does not have the luxury of ignoring the benefits of regional integration. With regard to the political sphere, most regional policies promote an agenda based on the principle of subsidiarity that holds that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizen, on a transfer of sovereignty from the state to supranational bodies, and on multilevel governance, three key elements modelled on the European experience.

Regional organizations' economic and political agendas, on the other hand, collide with the systems in place within African states, which are characterized by diverse corporate cultures and clientelism. While African regional organizations and their foreign donors strive to formalize the informal, politicians invest in private firms, and businessmen financially support or enter political campaigns, blurring the line between state and society. The fact that clientelism has proved resilient to virtually all free-market policies designed since the 1990s also means that African elites and their clients produce distinct regimes of integration that can hardly be called liberal or Western, and which do not necessarily lead to greater transparency, competition and social equality.

The liberalization of markets in countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa tends to benefit large-scale merchants who have adopted global ways of entrepreneurship and accumulation while maintaining strong ties to the country's political elite, rather than small-scale traders who benefit from the existence of border differentials. Transport corridors are another example of how African states and international organizations develop public–private partnerships that have an influence on the daily lives of small traders across the continent by making unrecorded trading more difficult. The gap between the normative view of regional integration and its concrete manifestation on the ground is likely to persist as long as African regional policies follow an imported model, which largely ignores the specificities of the continent and the potential of African business to promote regional development.

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