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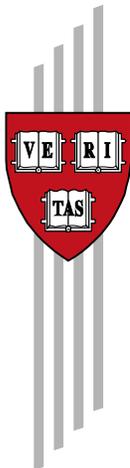
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Environmental Regionalism: The Challenge of the Alpine Convention and the “Strange Case” of the Andean Community

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CID Research Fellow and Graduate Student
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Jon Marco Church

Abstract

A number of regional mountain agreements are currently being negotiated. The 1991 Alpine Convention is often presented as the only model of international framework for a mountain range and the 2003 Carpathian Convention follows roughly the same model. However, there is at least one alternative model that is frequently ignored by scholars and practitioners alike: the 1969 Andean Community. First, this paper questions environmental regionalism, presenting it as an ideology and putting it under critical and historical perspective. Then, it compares the cases of both the Alpine Convention and the Andean Community. This paper suggests that the Andean Community may be a concurrent model for mountain agreements, especially in developing countries and conflict zones such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, or the Himalayas. These cases also contribute to a better understanding of environmental regionalism.

Keywords: environment, region, convention, Alps, Andes

JEL subject codes: F53 – International Organizations, Q01 – Sustainable Development, R58 – Regional Development Policy

Executive Summary

Understanding environmental regions (ecoregions) is an endeavor lying at the crossroads of several disciplines. Ecologists teach us to consider the characteristics of the different realms, as well as geological formations; geographers tell us to look at the shapes of the landscape and at the societies that inhabit it; turning to politics, the main focus is on local identities and global flows. Syncretistic approaches have been attempted in each discipline with varying results, while a grand synthesis is still missing. An ecoregion can be identified with a territory where there is a strong link between society and an environmental unit. However, there is an important distinction to be made between an ecoregion as a description and an ecoregion as a prescription: on the one hand, you *could* affirm that a dynamic of clustering around environmental regions is in motion (*ecoreginalization*), and you can find evidence thereof; on the other, it is different to argue that you *should* cluster together around ecoregions because this would lead to more advanced societies in more harmonious environments (*ecoregionalism*). As the idea of an ecoregion goes beyond description and is put into action, ecoregionalism becomes an ideology, at least for the actors involved. Mountains are significant examples to students of ecoregionalism because their territorial and human dimensions make them particularly challenging, arguably more than other types of ecosystem.

The 1991 Alpine Convention is often portrayed not only as the first regional mountain agreement, but also as the only existing model, the 2003 Carpathian Convention having been fashioned from its image. The 1969 Andean Community, however, can be considered as an alternative and even predated model. As far as the ecological dimension is concerned, the Andes are much larger and present a greater degree of diversity. While the Alpine Convention includes the whole Alpine Arc, the Andean Community currently does not include the Southern (Argentine and Chilean) and Venezuelan Andes. Economically, in the Alps, the two dominant sectors are tourism and transport, while climate and water are emerging issues. For the Andes, mining and water are object of great concern, while transport infrastructure is being upgraded regionally. If demographic patterns vary throughout the Alps, the depopulation of mountain regions in favor of urban centers is the prevailing feature in the Andes. Moreover, the economic disparity between the two ecoregions must be taken into account. Both the Alpine Convention and the Andean Community are products of the capitals and not of the locals. In the environmental field, two leading NGOs can be identified: CIPRA in the Alps and CONDESAN in the Andes, although the Andean Community does not recognize official observers, unlike the Alpine Convention. Both ranges represent mobilizing factors, but they compete with other elements, such as nation states, other integration processes, and norm circulation. Unlike Alpine states, the same official language is shared by all Andean states and the indigenous question plays an important political role.

While military and economic balance of power seems to be reflected in negotiations within the Andean Community, this is not so important in the Alps where other factors, such as the decentralization process and the institutions involved, play a greater role. Conversely, if the rotating presidency is extremely important in the Alps, the role of the secretariat is more prominent in the Andean Community. In both cases, while all parties may take the lead on certain issues, hegemonic positions do not go far, isolated positions are difficult to hold, and smaller countries practice free riding, also because of lack of institutional capacity. The Andean Community recently experienced military regimes and is divided along ideological lines. Despite its comprehensive approach, the Alpine Convention remains a regional environmental agreement, while the Andean Community is a regional integration organization, focusing more on social and economic issues. Spillover effects are fewer in the Alps than in the Andes, also because of the greater dependence on the EU of the former and the greater institutionalization of the latter. The disposition of national governments plays a key role in this regard.

Their diversity compels to question existing models for regional mountain agreements. As new agreements are being negotiated in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the Andean Community imposes itself as an alternative. In the Balkans, for instance, the security outlook is more akin to that of the Andes. The same can be argued for socio-economic features: depopulation and lower incomes. Ecologically, instead, their lesser extension points in the direction of the Alps, as well as the important presence of the EU. Also similarly to the Alps, the region is ethnically and linguistically divided. Like Andean states, instead, Balkan countries transitioned to liberal democracy only recently. A proliferation of such agreements is possible, such as in the case of regional seas agreements. Recently, the Mountain Forum, an NGO network, counted not less than 140 mountain ranges, at least 30% of which run across borders. At the time being, the Andean Community is the only existing alternative model to the Alpine Convention.

Citation, Context, and Program Acknowledgements

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About the Program

The Sustainability Science Program at Harvard's Center for International Development seeks to advance basic understanding of the dynamics of human-environment systems; to facilitate the design, implementation, and evaluation of practical interventions that promote sustainability in particular places and contexts; and to improve linkages between relevant research and innovation communities on the one hand, and relevant policy and management communities on the other. See <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/sustsci>.

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In 1998, a senior practitioner and a geographer engaged in a peculiar initiative at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.¹ With a rare move for political science, they resumed a study dating back to the 1930s, replicating it almost seventy years after. The study, which had been republished in the 1970s, was performed by the National Resources Committee, a US government agency established during the New Deal.² Entitled *Regional Factors in National Planning and Development*, this study looked at the potential use of "regions" for social and economic development. In fact, the Great Depression did not seem to stop at the border of states, counties, or any existing administrative unit. In 1933, this phenomenon had already led to the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a public enterprise at the scale of the Tennessee River Basin, which had particularly suffered from the economic downturn and which did not correspond to any preexisting institutional level.³ This experiment was based on the idea that the "regional" scale was the most appropriate for a government intervention, however this hypothesis still needed to be tested.

With the 1930s study, the National Resources Committee theoretically scrutinized "regionalism", collecting and analyzing the opinions of twelve experts.⁴ Nine physical characteristics of a region were identified: the territory should be contiguous, compact; the central core should be homogeneous, the periphery should be progressively diluted, and boundaries should be transition

¹ See Charles Foster and William Meyer (2000).

² See the 1974 reprint of the 1935 volume United States. National Resources Committee, *Regional Factors in National Planning and Development*, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Era of the New Deal (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974). The agency was initially called "National Planning Board" and by 1935 it had been renamed "National Resources Committee."

³ For a historical perspective, see Steven Neuse's recollections (1983). A similar initiative in the US was the creation in 1965 of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a partnership of federal, state, and local government for the economic development of the Appalachian region, a mountain area hit by poverty, unemployment, and emigration. In 1992, Michael Bradshaw published a reconstruction of a quarter of a century of ARC's history Michael J. Bradshaw, *The Appalachian Regional Commission: Twenty-Five Years of Government Policy* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1992).

⁴ Similarly to the Delphi method, an approach to forecasting elaborated in the 1960s at RAND, the study was based on a synthesis of the answers by a panel of experts to a standardized questionnaire, which was further submitted to the experts for revision. See in particular Harold Linstone and Murray Turoff (1975). However, the object of the study was not the future of regionalism, but to acquire a better understanding of the regional scale.

zones; the regions should have unity in environmental characteristics, with a dominant type of cultural pattern; a full economic-natural unit should be included; a whole problem area should also be included; a total cultural pattern should not be cut across; it should conform to existing regional consciousness; it should possess regional identity; and the size should be fairly large. Moreover, five methods for the delineation of regions were recognized: metropolitan spheres of influence; administrative and locational convenience; group of states arrangements; single function areas; and composite planning problems.⁵ As Foster and Meyer put it, presenting the view of regionalism that emerged from the New Deal study:

*Regionalism was seen as a way of enabling people to express and advance collectively their place based traditions, interests, and aspirations. The problem to the strategists then was how to modify a political and managerial system framed nationally to reflect the realities of how humans occupy the land.*⁶

Interestingly, this study was reproduced at the end of the 1990s, when the world underwent a new wave of regionalism.⁷ The *Harvard Regionalism Project* replicated the 1935 study, involving forty-eight contemporary experts and examining the literature that had proliferated after the Second World War.⁸ The expert opinions were compared with those of the 1930s, drawing insightful conclusions, even if the social and economic context had changed substantially. The opinions revolved around three questions: how an environmental region might be defined, whether other factors should be considered for the definition of an environmental region, what is the best type of region for environmental protection, and what administrative, policy, or legislative means might best advance environmental regionalism. As far as *how an environmental region might be defined*, the experts of the 1990s insisted more on congruity than homogeneity, maintaining that the range of possible organizing elements is wide. However, while in the 1930s river basins were considered a “poor organizing unit”, in the 1990s watersheds were seen as preferable to other elements.⁹ Concerning *whether other factors should be considered for the definition of an environmental region*, there was a consensus in basing regions on the environment. Nevertheless, if in the 1930s there was a greater interest in the role of states and of “governmentally created agencies”, in the 1990s the emphasis was on pragmatically adapting the environmental region to the “dominant institutions”, with a preference for dynamic and informal structures.¹⁰ Regarding *what is the best type of region for environmental protection*, both groups of experts agreed that it was a futile enterprise and that “different type of regions need not be mutually exclusive.” Finally, as far as *what administrative, policy, or legislative means might best advance environmental regionalism*, both groups recommended flexibility, not pointing out to “any one grand design”, rather setting forth a “more modest enterprise.”¹¹

The Harvard Project provided for useful tools to better understand environmental regionalism. First, it gave historical depth to a phenomenon, which is usually little known, and is often mistaken for a novel development. Second, it sets the complexity of the issue, displaying a plurality of views on environmental regionalism, also stemming from the combination of two polysemous

⁵ These results are synthesized at page 157 of the National Resources Committee’s report of 1935. United States. National Resources Committee, *Regional Factors in National Planning and Development*.

⁶ Quoted from Foster & Meyer (2000).

⁷ For a brief historical appraisal, see Fawcett (1995), as well as *infra*.

⁸ A colloquium discussing the project was also convened at the Harvard Kennedy School in June 2000.

⁹ See Foster & Meyer (2000). Ironically, in the 1930s, the first environmental regional experience in the US was precisely at the river basin scale, with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19 *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20 *Ibid.*

terms: “environment” and “region.” In the same line, the first two parts of this text look at so-called “ecoregions” and of regionalism, at the crossroads of which “ecoregionalism” can be understood.

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere.¹²*

Defining ecoregions

The frequent use of the term “natural borders” is a sign that the environment has always been a key element in the definition of the sovereignty and territoriality of nation states. Much of modern history was affected by the quest for borders “secured” by natural barriers, particularly for military concerns.¹³ According to the imperatives of geopolitics, it is in fact considered much easier to defend a territory whose frontiers coincide with landmarks, such as mountains, seas, lakes, and rivers.¹⁴ The Rhine River, for instance, played a great role in Franco-German relations and the fate of Poland in the 19th and early 20th century was closely linked to the absence of natural defenses, being surrounded by Germany to the West and Russia to the East.¹⁵ Another significant example is the border between Argentina and Chile, defined by the “highest summits” and “dividing waters” of the Andes.¹⁶ This phenomenon led to the consideration of natural frontiers as a strategic element for nation states. However, geographical landmarks, such as inland waters, plains, and reliefs, are also found, of course, within the national borders, and play a central role in spatial planning. Water management, for example, has been a tool for development at least since the VI millennium B.C. (e.g., canalizations, aqueducts, etc.), and people have regularly been moving from the plains to the hills according to need (e.g., food, health, etc.) since time immemorial.

An “ecoregion” (also known as “bioregion”, “georegion”, but also “biogeographical province”, etc.) is identified with a territory, when it coincides with a geographical landmark, such as a river basin (watershed or catchment area), a sea, a lake, or a mountain range, which usually corresponds, in turn, to an ecological system or several related ecosystems. However, the same phenomenon can be interpreted in different manners, depending on the point of view: ecological, geographical, political, etc. Within ecology itself, for example, there are various ways to identify ecoregions, depending on which realm (flora, fauna, etc.) or species you refer to and on who you speak with (a geologist, a botanist, a biologist, etc.). To a certain degree, it is a sociological matter. In the 1970s, Miklos Udvardy depicted well this debate in an influential study, proposing a classification of biogeographical provinces, with the aim of overcoming such divisions. A further evolution of this debate is represented by associating human and environmental systems, coupling them.¹⁷ A fairly

¹² Folk spiritual compiled by John Work (1865). Other American classic songs that feature mountains include “America”, “America the Beautiful”, and “God Bless America.”

¹³ For a historical perspective and a critical appraisal of this notion, see, for instance, Claude Raffestin (1986). See also Nicholas Buache’s *Essay d’une nouvelle division politique*, where he proposes a theory of natural borders, to restore a “natural division” of the world and remove the “origin of most wars.”

¹⁴ See, in particular, the geopolitical work on fronts and frontiers of Michel Foucher (1991), as well as the interpretation of the Alps as a bridge by Hans-Rudolf Egli and Paul Messerli (2003). See also the reflections on ecoregionalism and German right wing ecology by Jonathan Olsen (2000).

¹⁵ On the other hand, the presence of the Baltic Sea and of the Carpathian Mountains contributed to the relative protection of Poland from the neighbors to the North, Sweden, and to the South, Austria. On international environmental cooperation in the Baltic ecoregion, see Stacy VanDeever (2004).

¹⁶ See article 1 of the 1881 Boundary Treaty between Argentina and Chile. It should be reminded that this agreement was negotiated during the 1879-1884 Pacific War.

¹⁷ On coupled human-environmental systems, see, in particular, the edited volume *The Earth as transformed by human action* (1993) and the contribution by William Easterling and Colin Polsky (2004). I am indebted to Prateep Nayak for this insight, and to Matthew Gilbert for his precious feedback.

consensual definition emerged from these works, an interdisciplinary synthesis converging on an ecosystemic approach.¹⁸ This is the classical definition of an ecoregion, which the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and WWF contributed to vulgarize, using it extensively in the 2000s:

*...large areas of relatively uniform climate that harbor a characteristic set of species and ecological communities.*¹⁹

Examples of ecoregions are the Alpine Arc, the Mediterranean Sea, the Danube Delta, the Amazon Forest, the Tahitian Marine, and the Patagonian Steppe.

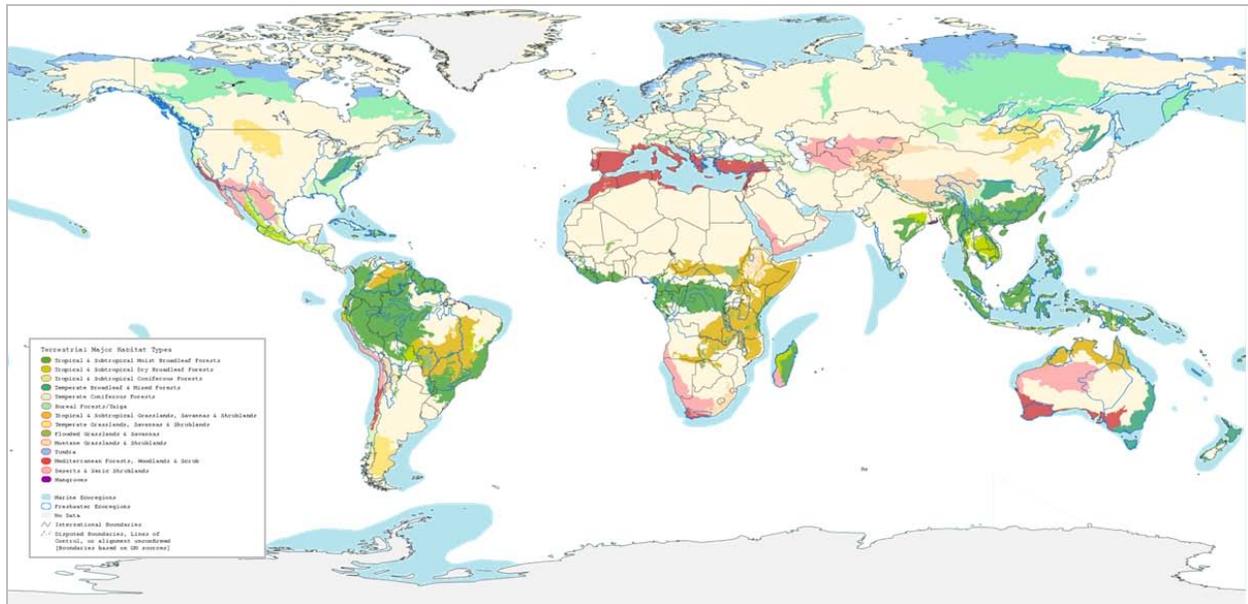


Figure 1: Ecoregions according to WWF in its *Global 200 Analysis* (1999-2000).

*Forse la gioia è nella geografia che non ha nomi di persona ma catene di mondi continenti città mari campi. Ere.*²⁰

Geographers have also put considerable efforts in defining ecoregions. Looking at a normal physical world map is a telling example of which environmental landmarks are considered to be most relevant by geographers: waters (seas, lakes, rivers, etc.) and reliefs (plains, mountains, etc.). However, the challenges faced in the delineation of the perimeter of application of the regional en-

¹⁸ The study *A classification of the biogeographical provinces of the world* was published by IUCN and was prepared as a contribution to an initiative that UNESCO had just launched, and that would be instrumental to the development of ecoregionalism, the “Man and the Biosphere Programme” (1975).

¹⁹ In 2000, the CBD, adopted the so-called “ecosystem approach” as its framework for action (decision V/6). However, the ecosystem approach was applied mainly to fisheries and forests and left mountains and other human-environment systems aside. In the same vein, in the early 2000s, WWF engaged in a process to identify the 200 most biologically distinct ecoregions in the world and employed this operational definition. See for example their specific report for the Alpine ecoregion (2001). In particular, according to Matthew Gilbert, from the perspective of biodiversity they are “the unit of area that contains a minimum core group of species that characterize that diversity and may be sustained.”

²⁰ “Maybe joy is with geography that has no / names of people but chains of mountains / continents cities seas. Eras.” Translated by the author and quoted from *Fuoco centrale* by Mariangela Gualtieri (2003).

vironmental agreements analyzed here is a testimony of the difficulty of this exercise. Geography itself started as an effort to name and to define the various parts of the known world. One can identify three main trends in the practice of geographical designation: Friedrich Ratzel's environmental determinism, Lucien Febvre's geographical possibilism, and a hybrid approach.²¹ In the first case, the emphasis is on the effects of the natural environment on human societies (as a reaction to racial determinism) and on the belief that similar environments lead to similar societies. Landscape geography (in German: *Landschaft*), for example, looks at a natural area with the objective of providing a systematical and exhaustive description of nature and society. In the second and opposite case, geographers highlight the human dimension (criticizing environmental determinists, which underestimated the human capacity to affect nature), looking at differences within societies and environments. Early regional geography (*Länderkunde*), in fact, looked at a social unit, such as a nation state, always with the objective of describing society and its environment in a systematical and exhaustive manner.²² The typical products of these approaches were monographs on a state (France, Argentina, etc.). Of course, a region defined on purely environmental grounds can have features which are different from a region defined on social, cultural, or linguistic bases.²³

In the 20th century, regional geography evolved significantly, hybridizing the two approaches in the works, for instance, of Raoul Blanchard, who combined the use of toponymy, geology, climatology, and hydrography in the designation of Alpine subregions, or of Norbert Krebs, who worked comparatively, reminiscent of the tradition initiated by Alexander Von Humboldt and Thaddäus Haenke's early 19th century scientific expeditions in the Andes, which is still alive today.²⁴ Since the 1970s, these approaches have led to more interdisciplinary approaches, which are particularly influenced by economics.²⁵ Looking at production strategies and land use (*Landnutzung*), for example, displaced the debate from the geographical definition of a region to its usage by economic agents. In these hybrid approaches, regional systems are studied analyzing socioeconomic and ecologic subsystems and combining them.²⁶ Other scholars criticize such approaches pointing out that it is not sufficient to look at economic imperatives or ecologic limits, proposing to look, instead, at how the geographical space is perceived and represented by social groups.²⁷ Another group of scholars, building on these critiques, pushes this perspective further, arguing that environment and nature are essentially social constructs, that we appropriate unknown and uninhabited space transforming it into relatively known and partially inhabited territory.²⁸ Definitions of ecoregions can therefore be found not only in the environmental deterministic literature, but also in hybrid and constructivist approaches, especially those that emphasize the environmental dimension, but they will depend on to the variables considered and their respective weight (e.g., water v. altitude, agri-

²¹ See Paolo Viazzo's lucid panoramic on the subject matter (1989). See also Richard Hartshorne's classical narrative on the historical development of geographical research. I am grateful to François Mancebo for expanding my horizons on this literature.

²² For an insightful presentation, see Werner Bätzing's interview on of the development of regional geography in *Revue de géographie alpine* (2001) and, by the same author the monograph *Les Alpes* (2005). See also Philippe and Geneviève Pinchemel, who revisited the concepts of landscape and region (1988).

²³ For a strong social and cultural view of regions, see Anssi Paasi (1996).

²⁴ See in particular Bernard Debarbieux's contribution on Blanchard (2001) and Axel Borsdorf and Valérie Braun's passage on comparative regional geography (2008).

²⁵ See, for instance, the regional geographer John Allen (1998).

²⁶ See again Bätzing (2001).

²⁷ For such reflectivist perspectives, see the works of Eric Dardel (1952) that were reintroduced to the geographical debate also thanks to Claude Raffestin (1987).

²⁸ On the concept of territory in the geographical literature, see again Raffestin (1986), also for reflections on the meaning of territoriality, a close relative of Foucault's concept of governmentality, and its relationship with Lotman's semiosphere (1985).

cultural v. linguistic practices, etc.). So, while the ecologists help us understand the tension in the quest for a system of reference in the definition of an ecoregion (flora, geology, etc.), the geographical literature is instrumental in questioning the relationship between societies and their environments and their perception and construction thereof. Should we privilege the social or the environmental dimension in our definitions? This question was topical at the beginning of contemporary international environmental regionalism in the 1970s and remains open today.

Politically speaking, as a first approximation, we normally distinguish between national regions, which are the territorial units between the local and the national level (which usually corresponds to an administrative unit)²⁹, and international regions, which are groups of states between the global and the national level (normally corresponding to a continent or to another geographical unit). In the 1960s, Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan defined regions as a product of a center-periphery cleavage³⁰ “between the central nation building culture and the increasing resistance of the ethnically, linguistically and religious subject population in the provinces.”³¹ While this tension is historically grounded in the resistance to the centralization process that came along with nation building in modern times, from the Tuscany of the Renaissance to the France of Louis XIV, in recent years we assisted in several European countries to state induced decentralization, for example, in France, with the creation of regions and, in the United Kingdom, with the so-called devolution process of the 1990s. These phenomena were generally appraised from two opposite perspectives: on the one extreme, Amitai Etzioni would see the reemergence of communitarian dynamics;³² on the other, globalists would interpret the apparent weakening of the nation state as “the end of geography” or even the “end of territories.”³³ From the literature, the political significance of the scholarly debate around regions emerges clearly, especially in the wake of politically salient phenomena such as Basque independentists in Spain or the Northern League in Italy. Micheal Keating contributed to nuancing this cleavage, reading this “new regionalism” as a convergence of functional pressures on national institutions, which are overburdened by the welfare state, and local mobilizations, which seek political autonomy, ultimately leading to a renewed “territoriality.”³⁴

Students of international relations have also dedicated much attention to the definition of international regions. In this case as well as, the literature often responded to the emergence of new phenomena, which called for interpretation. In fact, early studies reacted to the wave of post World War II regional institutionalism, from the beginning of European integration in the 1950s to the creation ASEAN. In the 1960s, Joseph Nye gave a classical definition of an international region:

*...a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence.*³⁵

²⁹ The European Union adopted a system of territorial statistical units, the so-called “NUTS system”: the NUTS1 level corresponds to groups of regions (in France, *ZEAT*), NUTS2 to regions (*régions*), NUTS3 to counties (*départements*), LAU1 to districts (*cantons de rattachement*), and LAU2 to municipalities (*communes*).

³⁰ In the 1970s, a center-periphery model applied to international relations contributed to the development of so-called dependency theory: if the structure of the world system follows those lines, economic development can then be understood as the tension between countries at the center and those at the periphery for their position in the system (Wallerstein 1974, 1980; Cardoso and Faletto 1984). The same model could be applied at both macro and micro scales.

³¹ See their influential *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (1967).

³² This argument is strongly put forward in *The Spirit of Community* (1993). See, also, Charles Tilly (1998).

³³ As argued in Richard O'Brien (1992) and more strongly in Bertrand Badie (1995).

³⁴ See his *The New Regionalism in Western Europe* (1998), particularly chapter 4 . See also Richard Balme (1994, 1996).

³⁵ Quoted from Nye (1968).

In his view, the process of regionalization then corresponds to “the formation of interstate groupings on the basis of regions.” This definition was clearly built on the work of geographers, but also transpired a strong bias towards state centrism and was strongly criticized mainly for this reason, at that time when nation states were seen as fundamentally obsolete. The problem is similar to the one we observed among ecologists and geographers, where the main challenge is, in the words of Ernst Haas, to select among a plethora of variables and linking them. In the 1970s, Haas himself, despite being a strong proponent of regionalism, argued that the discipline was still far from clearly knowing where regional integration was going.³⁶

However, all the mainstream currents of international relations scholarship provide several interpretations of the phenomenon of regionalization. Neorealists insist on the anarchical nature of international relations and see regional agreements as strategic alliances or alignments, based on geographical proximity and other contingent factors, such as the general balance of power and the current hegemon, facing the usual issue of free riding. Significant examples are regional organizations for collective defense such as NATO (an illustration of hegemonic America and free rider Europe) or trading blocs in global negotiations such as the EC (a strategic alliance around the commercial power of Germany).³⁷ Neo-functionalists look at the spillover effects of international regionalism, which are supposed to induce deeper integration, or “peace in pieces”, while neo-liberal institutionalists, assuming the growing interdependence of the global economy, focus on the reduction of transaction costs produced by international regimes (quite literally, knocking at the next door, instead of flying to Tokyo). Meaningful examples here are the recent developments of the EU, which went far beyond a regional alliance, as well as the proliferation of all kinds of environmental regimes, from the desert to wetlands, from the ozone to climate.³⁸ Looking at the formation and impact of ideas and intersubjective meanings, the contribution of social constructivists to the understanding of international regionalism is that of unembedding actorness. If a region is socially constructed, then any regional process is based on a preexisting sense of community or on communicative efforts by a societal group.³⁹ Particular attention is paid to norms as means of political action.⁴⁰ The European construction could be read, for example, either as a product of a shared understanding among the general population concerning the need for a greater union in Europe or as the result of persuasive efforts by select groups sharing the same vision for the continent and enshrined in normative texts. Finally, comparative skeptics produced approaches at the domestic level, looking at variables such as state coherence (weak states would not be able to engage in region building) or regime type (democracy could facilitate regionalism, or it could represent an obstacle). According to this approach, as Andrew Hurrell puts it, “integration ... emerged from the pursuit of quite narrowly focused national policies and parochial rather than internationalist visions and could result in a strengthening, not a weakening of the role of the state.”⁴¹ If this perspective is correct, the proliferation of regional initiatives, even the European integration process, is a sign of the strength of

³⁶ See Haas (1970).

³⁷ See the classics of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz (1979), Stephen Walt (1985). For a recent contribution on the ambivalent role of great powers at the regional scale, see Andrew Hurrell (2007) and Miriam Prys (2010).

³⁸ The seminal work for neofunctionalism is Ernst Haas (1964) and for neoliberalism is Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1977). According to Louise Fawcett, “after the 1960s ... liberals moved away from ... regionalism and focused instead on ... transnationalism and interdependence” (1995). On international regimes, see also Stephen Krasner’s collective book (1983). On “peace in pieces” or “parts”, see Nye (1971).

³⁹ See Alexander Wendt’s several contributions (1999, 1987, 1992); for a critical appraisal, read Risse-Kappen (1994).

⁴⁰ See, in particular, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) and, on a similar note, *The Theory of Communicative Action* by Jürgen Habermas (1987). The normative constructivist literature can be considered as the intellectual heir of the liberal idealism of the early 20th century.

⁴¹ Quoted from Hurrell (1995).

states, not of their weakness. Contrary to this view, Louise Fawcett argues in the same book that “the widely held view that a key aim of regional cooperation should be not the weakening but the strengthening of national autonomy remains a serious obstacle to effective regionalism.”⁴²

Especially since the new wave of international regionalism of the 1990s, which came along with the end of the Cold War⁴³ and which manifested itself in the form of the creation of new regional agreements such as NAFTA or Mercosur and the deepening of existing integration processes such as the European Union with the Maastricht Treaty (also called “new regionalism”), we assisted to a proliferation of takes on the topic.⁴⁴ However, instead of growing clearer, definitions became increasingly blurred. Looking at the origin of the regional idea, as Louise Fawcett puts it, “there is no single explanation ... there is a sense of ‘regional awareness’ ... there is a desire by states ‘to make the best of their regional environment.’”⁴⁵ Andrew Hurrell, putting regionalism in a theoretical perspective, concludes that

*...there are no “natural” regions and the definitions of “regions” and the indicators of “region-ness” vary according to the particular problem or question under investigation.*⁴⁶

While the need for a geographical reference is clear, frustration with “scientific” attempts to delineate regions in environmental, geographic, or political science is great.⁴⁷ The variables at stake are simply too many. Recent attempts, for instance, to move away from physical regionalism and revive “functional” approaches, if they did not succeed to represent more than an *ex post* rationalizations of regional “flows”, they stigmatized the tension between what is perceived as a realist and a constructivist perspective on regions.⁴⁸ If the constructivist “turn” did contribute to the understanding that “regions disappear and reappear as they are transformed by various economic, political and cultural factors”,⁴⁹ it did not come at terms with the *ex ante* physicality of regions. This is further problematized by the phenomenon of ecoregions, where the distinctive element is the physical territory, which exists independently from society, but is perceived and conditioned by it.

Understanding ecoregions is therefore an endeavor lying at the crossroads of several disciplines. Ecologists teach us to consider the characteristics of the different realms, as well as geological formations; geographers tell us to look at the shapes of the landscape and at the societies that inhabit it; turning to politics, the main focus is on local identities and global flows. Syncretistic approaches have been attempted in each discipline with varying results, while a grand synthesis is still missing. According to William Clark, sustainability science could play an important role in this

⁴² Quoted from Fawcett (1995). For a perspective on developing countries, see also the contribution by James Mayall in the same book (1995).

⁴³ See Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* for a provocative view on the end of ideological confrontation (1992). For a historical perspective of international regionalism, see again Fawcett (1995).

⁴⁴ For an authoritative and comprehensive perspective, see Hurrell (1995) or Gamble (2007).

⁴⁵ Quoted from Fawcett (1995).

⁴⁶ Quoted from Hurrell (1995).

⁴⁷ Mainstream statistical approaches, for example, tend to make territorial statistical units correspond to the various administrative levels: for eloquent examples, see the definition of “macroregions” employed by the United Nations’s Statistical Division, which roughly correspond to cardinal sections of the five continents (e.g. North America, Western Europe, etc.), as well as EUROSTAT’s definition of EU territorial statistical units (*i.e.* NUTS1-2-3, LAU1-2), which exactly correspond to national administrative units.

⁴⁸ See Raimo Väyrynen (2003); see also Hettne, Inotai & Sunkel (1999). The concept of “functional” regions (economic, environmental, etc.) can also be understood from a “sectorial” or “field” perspective, leading to insightful analyses of the social configurations that constitute such regions.

⁴⁹ Quoted from Väyrynen (2003).

regard.⁵⁰ At a second degree of approximation, an ecoregion can be identified with a territory where there is a strong link between society and an environmental unit.⁵¹ However, paraphrasing Andrew Hurrell, there is an important distinction to be made between an ecoregion as a description and an ecoregion as a prescription⁵²: on the one hand, you *could* affirm that a dynamic of clustering around environmental regions is in motion, and you can find evidence thereof; on the other, it is different to argue that you *should* cloud together around ecoregions because this would lead to more advanced societies in more harmonious environments. As the idea of an ecoregion goes beyond description and is put into action, ecoregionalism becomes an ideology, at least for the actors involved.⁵³

A concrete example: the definition of the scope of application of the Alpine and Carpathian conventions

Delimiting mountains should be relatively easy: they are massive, they cannot be missed. However, it is not: how to consider the land adjacent to mountains? what about steep terrains, even outside of mountain ranges? and plateaus, do not they resemble lowlands? In the case of the two existing regional mountain agreements, defining their limits proved to be a contentious issue, particularly on the Carpathian side. Delimiting the perimeter within which the agreement is to be in force is fundamental to ensure the certainty of law; otherwise, it would not be possible to verify if the terms of the agreements are upheld. Historically, the approaches to the delimitation of mountains are numerous and often depend on the definitions found in national mountain laws.⁵⁴ Since the 1970s, the “Europeanization” of mountain agriculture and the irruption of computerized geographic information systems (GIS) in the 1990s, contributed to the emergence of standardized approaches, which soon acquired general currency. These new approaches defined mountains on the basis of three variables: altitude, slope, and ecological factors.⁵⁵ This represented a shift from both the traditional approach based on major ranges and mountain ecosystems and the socio-economic perspective, which considered mountains as less-favored regions, assimilating them to rural and agricultural areas, consequently presenting mountains as “developing” regions. Mountain regions are not once, but “twice”, or even “tridimensionally rural”, as to the length and width of rurality, mountains add a third dimension: height. This perspective entitled mountain regions to receive EU structural funding, which could have been threatened by approaches that would have modified the existing definitions of mountains. However, these new approaches have only contributed to increase the perceived extension of mountain areas. For instance, the traditional estimate of the percentage of

⁵⁰ See Clark (2007; 2003).

⁵¹ In international relations, the nation state is usually taken as the main unit of reference for society. Other levels could be considered, such as that of individual citizens, local governments, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, or international organizations. However, in the economy of this text, these units are analyzed from the perspective of the nation state. For a classic discussion on the level of analysis in international relations, see David Singer (1961).

⁵² For reference, see Hurrell (1995).

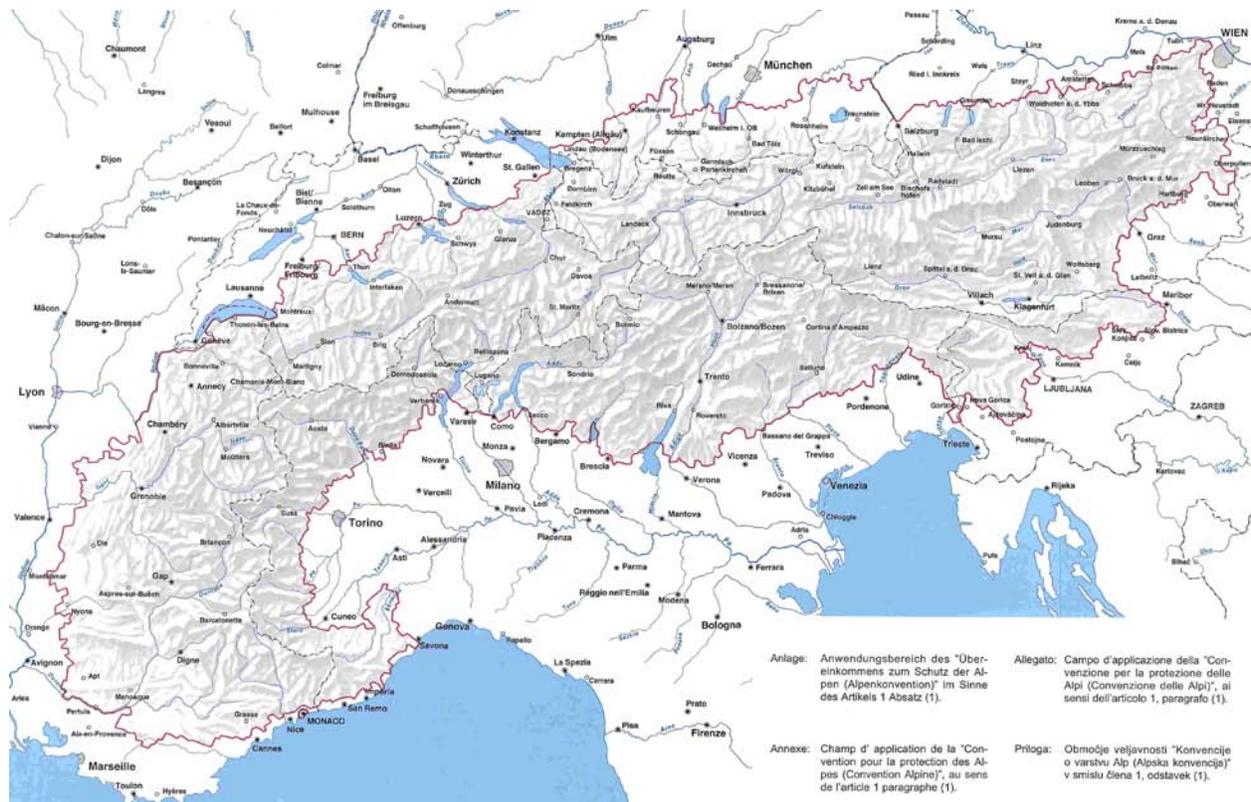
⁵³ On ecoregional mobilization in mountain regions, see the special issue of the *Revue de Géographie Alpine* on “mountain regions as referents for collective action”, particularly the contribution by Gilles Rudaz (2009).

⁵⁴ Special laws in support of mountain regions have been present, for example, in Austrian, French, Italian, and Swiss law since the 1950s.

⁵⁵ For a general overview on the delimitation process of European mountains, see in particular Price, Lysenko & Gloersen (2004). Four milestones are the study by Messerli & Ives (1997), the proposal by Kapos *et al.* (2000), the synthesis by UNEP/WCMC (2002), and a report to the European Commission prepared by NOR-DREGIO (2004). An ecological factor that was considered in these studies and that had significant consequences was the assimilation of the subarctic environments of Scandinavia to alpine ones: if subarctic regions were considered less favored areas, they would qualify for EU structural funding, just like mountains (Sweden and Finland had joined the EU in 1995).

world population living in mountain regions shifted from the traditional value of 10% to a range between 12% and 26%, depending on the definition adopted.⁵⁶ However, a shared definition at the European level is still missing, also because of the reluctance of the EU to launch a specific policy for mountain regions.⁵⁷

In the case of the 1991 Alpine Convention, article 1(1) refers to a map annexed to the framework convention as the Alpine region. The map was defined before the finalization of the convention and corresponds to an arbitrary, but agreed upon, definition, which takes in consideration the preferences of the Alpine states, while corresponding approximately to what is generally understood to be the Alpine Arc. Noteworthy exceptions are represented by the exclusion of part of the Southern extremity of the French Alps, because of the presence of an important transport axis, and by a scope of application that, in Italy, was defined at the provincial level, while in all other states it is provided at the municipal level.⁵⁸ It must be noted that the exact definition of the scope of application of the convention is important also because the contributions to the functioning of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention are calculated on the basis of a formula, which considers the share of surface, population, and GDP of the Alpine region in each state.⁵⁹



⁵⁶ See Price *et al.* (2004).

⁵⁷ In this regard, see the words of the then European commissioners Margot Wallström (environment) and Loyola de Palacio (transport) reported by Luciano Caveri (2002); see also *infra*.

⁵⁸ On transport issues, see Price (1999). For a greater effectiveness of environmental indicators, it is generally recommended for scope of applications to be defined at the municipal level (Hain 2004; NORDREGIO 2004). Italy is currently redefining the perimeter of the convention within its territory, adapting it to the scale of the other Alpine states (Ruffini, Streifeneder, and Eiselt 2005).

⁵⁹ See the annex 3 to the decision VII/2 (2002), as well as Juliet Fall and Harald Egerer for the reflexes this decision had on the development of the Carpathian Convention (2004).

Figure 2: Perimeter of the Alpine Convention.

The case of the Carpathian Convention is more complicated. As reconstructed by Juliet Fall and Harald Egerer, now Interim Secretary of the Carpathian Convention, a first map had been produced, in January 2003, by an expert geographer at UNEP in Geneva. Despite some inaccuracies, the map was based on “scientific” grounds. However, it was unacceptable for some states. In particular, Romania protested because the definition included the Transylvanian Plateau, which was excluded from the national definition and which would have resulted in too large a share of the Romanian territory within the scope of the convention; Serbia also protested because of a clearly inaccurate delimitation, which also included a much larger area. Both countries were also concerned for the restrictions to economic development that future protocols to the conventions could impose on strategic regions (e.g., the Carpathians cut Romania in two parts, which are also ethnically diverse). By March, a second map had been produced, drastically reducing the surface within the scope in Romania and Serbia. This led, in turn, to a dispute between Hungary and Romania, which revolved around the use of the expression “Carpathian mountains” instead of simply “Carpathians” (which could have also included the Transylvanian Plateau).⁶⁰ Besides the historical tensions between Budapest and Bucharest, this also depended on the rules for the financial contributions to the convention that were under negotiation at the same time, which followed the Alpine model.⁶¹



⁶⁰ See the article “Constructing the Carpathians” (2004).

⁶¹ However, pursuant to article 17 of the 2003 Carpathian Convention, the scale of contributions is not fixed and is to be determined by the parties. COP1, held in 2006 in Kiev, adopted the financial rules, making the scale conditional upon to the work program of the convention, and the final location of the Permanent Secretariat, but fixing only a temporary scale, which set an equal repartition for all countries, except Serbia, without considering the size of the parties (decisions COP1/2 and COP1/3). COP2, held in 2008 in Bucharest, did not take any further action in this regard, given that the questions of the location of the secretariat and the scope of application remained open, except for a minor increase of contributions.



Figure 3: UNEP proposals of January (above) and April 2003 (below).

However, the dispute was not solved before the parties decided to adopt the framework convention. In fact, according to article 1(1) of the 2003 Carpathian Convention, the scope of application is not decided upon; it is not annexed to the convention text as in the case of the Alpine Convention; and it is to be determined by the parties, *de facto* freezing and postponing the issue. In May 2003, at the time of the opening of the convention for signature, Romania deposited a formal reservation to article 1(1), which was reproduced in its law of ratification:

The Government of Romania considers the term “Carpathian region” in article 1, paragraph 1, of the Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians as designating the Carpathian mountain area, which is defined, on the territory of Romania, in accordance with physico-geographical and biological criteria, as well as with socio-economic criteria related to a reduced land use potential and to the relationship of the local population with the specific physical environmental features, and also in conformity with the criteria of the European Community regarding the delimitation of alpine bio-geographical regions, based on the Council Directive 92/43/EEC [the so-called “Habitat Directive”] on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

It is interesting to note that the Romanian government used “scientific” criteria to justify its preventive rejection of any perimeter that included the Transylvanian Plateau (while the first meeting of the Implementation Committee of the convention ironically took place in Sibiu, in the heart of the plateau); the reference to the *acquis communautaire* is also worth noting, at a time when Bucharest was still struggling to become a member state (also considering that the EU definition coincided with the Romanian position). At the conference of the parties for the adoption of the text of the convention, the Italian government, which had supported the development of the convention since the beginning of the process in 2001, proposed to commission a comprehensive study of the geographi-

cal scope to EURAC, a research center which had contributed to the new perimetrization of the Alpine Convention at the municipal level and which was also contributing to the development of the Carpathian Convention. This study should have served as a sort of mediation instrument. This led to a new study, which examined the issue in detail, looking at existing methodologies, national delimitations, and environmental factors, adapting the innovative approaches that were being developed at the European level to the Carpathian region.⁶²

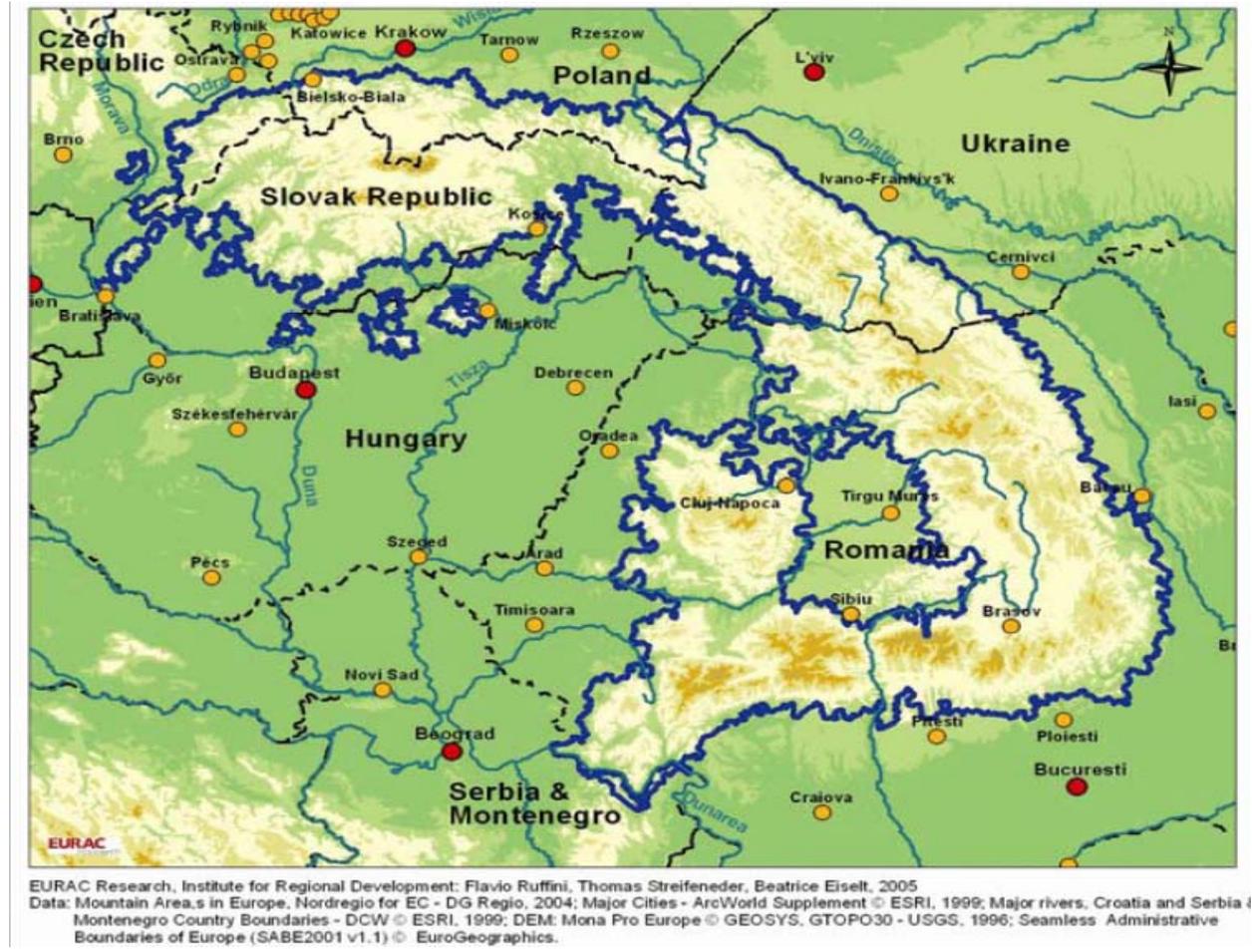


Figure 4: The Carpathian region according to the European typology of mountain classes of NORDREGIO (2004).

However, the issue remained extremely contentious at the political level. Ukraine, for instance, which acts as the depository of the convention, objected to the Romanian reservation with a formal letter, dated August 3, 2007:

As the decision on the scope of the Carpathian region has not been made yet Ukraine is of the opinion that the reservations made by Romania should be understood as a unilateral (restricting) definition of the term "Carpathian region", which does not correspond to the definition of this term foreseen by the Convention.

⁶² See Flavio Ruffini, Thomas Streifeneder and Beatrice Eiselt (2006). For a similar approach at the European level, see NORDREGIO (2004).

In fact, the spirit of the convention seems to lean towards more integrative and inclusive approaches, also beyond the strict definition of the mountain region. For example, the areas proposed in recent years by the some actors for a “Carpathian Space” in the framework of EU structural funding goes well beyond that of the Carpathian ecoregion.⁶³ However, a combination of historical rivalry, of concerns for the excessive weight of some countries (Romania could represent up to half of the Carpathian region, depending on the delimitation approach; the same could be said of Austria and Italy in the Alps) or for the amount of contributions expected, as well as for future protocols that could impose what can be perceived as excessive restrictions to the economic development of mountain regions, as sometimes advocated by environmentalist groups, a combination of all these factors does impact the political interests of certain countries and does induce the caution demonstrated in the process of definition of the scope of application of the Carpathian Convention.⁶⁴ Neither COP1 in 2006 nor COP2 in 2008 produced a solution to a problem, which remains frozen.⁶⁵

⁶³ See, in particular, decisions COP1/13 (2006), COP2/2, and COP2/11 (2008), as well as the two final ministerial declarations adopted in Kiev and Bucharest.

⁶⁴ See, for example, the reading in Latourian terms (1999) proposed by Fall & Egerer, who argue that “the very thing that is taken to be the object of environmental studies and politics—namely ‘nature’—is an effect of power” (2004).

⁶⁵ As long as the Permanent Secretariat is not created (currently, an Interim Secretariat is hosted by UNEP in Vienna, and supported by Austria), the need to revise the temporary scale for contributions, which are less than €200,000 for the functioning of the whole convention (decisions COP1/3 and COP2/13), is low. For an in depth analysis of the outcomes of COP2, see the contribution by Arianna Broggiato and the author (2008).



Figure 5: A proposal for a “Carpathian Development Region” or “Carpathian Space” for the purpose of EU structural funding (Jordan 2006).

Ecoregionalism as an ideology?

Ideology can be defined as a series of ideas that describe the world and are used to change it.⁶⁶ The concept had mixed fortunes, being dismissed by Karl Marx as a set of beliefs to deceive people, while becoming central to Lenin’s theory of action. It is usually employed to refer to various *isms*: from positivism to communism, but also classicism, Reaganism, constitutionalism, environmentalism, etc. It often has a negative connotation, but not always. Many have seen, in the end of ideological confrontation between the East and the West in the 1990s, an end of ideology *tout court*;

⁶⁶ In its original acception, in the 18th century, the term was used to indicate Destutt de Tracy’s “science of ideas”, which aimed at “improving the life of men on earth.” Ideology not only explained the world as it was, but also had practical consequences. On mountain as an “ideological model”, see Jean Untermaier (2008).

many pointed out the decline of ideology in the West long before the end of the Cold War;⁶⁷ however, as long as ideas exist and as long as they are used as a basis for action by some groups, ideology lives. Could ecoregionalism itself be considered as an ideology, given that an ecoregion is an idea and it is used to affect politics? Ironically, its latest reincarnations, so to say, from the creation of the Alpine Convention in 1991 to the Carpathian Convention in 2003, as well as the CBD and the WWF espousing the ecosystem and ecoregional approach, manifested themselves when ideologies were considered a thing of the past, actually shifting to a “more explicitly scientific and managerial discourse, deriving mainly from the field of conservation biology”, possibly a form of path dependency transformed into bureaucratic routines.⁶⁸

Arguably, one of the greatest contributions of political science is testing ideas before or after they are put into practice.⁶⁹ Can and does ecoregionalism deliver, then, its promise of more advanced societies in more harmonious environments? Does it contribute to sustainability? This text is a contribution to testing ecoregionalism under the light of existing ecoregional initiatives in the Alps in Europe and, for the purpose of comparison, in the Andes in South America. However, the reader must not be misled: it is clear that, in the economy of this text, an impact evaluation of ecoregional initiatives on societies and their environments using quantitative methods such as inferential statistics is not possible. The significant variables between the international level and the societal and environmental dimensions are too many to come to any meaningful result.⁷⁰ In the words of a delegation member to the Alpine Convention, “to my knowledge, the convention has never gone out and planted a tree or helped a farmer.”⁷¹ The scope of this analysis is therefore limited to the reflections of ecoregionalism on the relations among nations. In fact, this text looks in particular at the concrete example of the Alpine Convention, which is the first international mountain ecoregional agreement (launched in the early 1990s by the Alpine states together with the now EU), together with the case of the Andean Community, which is a regional integration organization, which also identifies itself with a mountain range, and which serves as a counterexample (created in the late 1960s).⁷²

⁶⁷ See, in particular, Raymond Aron (1955) and Chaim Waxman (1969); see also, on the most recent debate, Fukuyama (1992).

⁶⁸ Juliet Fall and Harald Egerer in the article “Constructing the Carpathians: the Carpathian Convention and the search for a spatial ideal” come actually close to an ideological reading of an ecoregional initiative (2004, quoted from p. 88). For a recent example of an ideological, action-oriented perspective, see Ton Bührs, who argues in favor of ecological integration as the most effective manner to face environmental challenges (2009).

⁶⁹ The current debate on the role of political science is particularly relevant in this regard: see, in particular, Joseph Nye (2009) and, in Europe, Michael Keating (2009) and Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil (2009).

⁷⁰ Reminiscent of the *Methodenstreit* of the early 20th century, a debate on method is currently taking place among political scientists, opposing quantitativists and qualitativists, as well as method and problem oriented research; among those specializing in international relations, the debate seems to have taken a “pragmatic” turn: in this regard, for skeptical perspectives on statistical “puritanism” in international relations, see the edited book by Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi (2009), in particular the recent contribution by Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil (2009). On a slightly different note, see Vincent Pouliot’s recent article on the logic of “practicality” (2008).

⁷¹ These words were collected by the author in 2006 from a source that wished to remain anonymous.

⁷² The Andean Community, created in 1969 with the Cartagena Agreement, can be seen as the first international regional mountain framework. Nevertheless, despite the fact that integrated development (in Spanish: *desarrollo integrado*) has been among its objectives since the very beginning (article 26), environmental concerns remained marginal until the late 1990s. The fact that a Council of Ministers of the Environment was

Why choosing, in particular, mountain ranges? It would be possible to look, for instance, at water surfaces (international rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans), where the cases are several and the literature abundant.⁷³ According to Claude Raffestin, “land and sea, mountains and rivers, forests and deserts” share the fact that they are “morphologies that originally do not owe anything to anthropic action.” They are “border areas” between unknown and uninhabited spaces and relatively known and partially inhabited territories. However, we appropriate these morphologies and transform them into territories in different manners. Some of these spaces “are integrated within some territories, but they seem forgotten.”⁷⁴ Paradoxically, despite the fact that, unlike other natural environments, they are integral part of national territories and that they are often inhabited, when looked at from the plains,⁷⁵ the study of mountains seems even more necessary than other environments. This is particularly evident when looking, for example, at the meager scientific literature on mountains. Mountains are, therefore, significant examples to students of ecoregionalism because their territorial and human dimensions make them particularly challenging, arguably more than other types of ecosystem. Why looking, in particular, at international relations? First and foremost, because ecoregionalism is a political ideology that is practiced at many levels, including local government, and the international level is the most problematic. In fact, in contrast with regional mountain initiatives in the US, such as the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Sierra Nevada Conservancy,⁷⁶ the Alpine and the Andean regions are crossed by international borders. This fact raises a wide array of questions that national examples necessarily do not. Then, the international level is the most visible, often the best studied. It gives access to a distinct pool of information to contribute to formulate answers.

So, in order to further explore the reflections of ecoregionalism on international relations, an example and a counterexample are proposed. The joint reading of these examples should represent a test for ecoregionalism as it is put in action in the Alps and, differently, in the Andes. It should also contribute to better understand the phenomenon, also in case such regional environmental initiatives are replicated in other regions, such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, or the Himalayas.

created only in 2004 is a sign both of the low profile that these issues enjoyed until then and of the rising interest for them in recent years (decision 596).

⁷³ In the 1990s, Peter Haas performed an in-depth analysis of the 1975 Mediterranean Action Plan and the subsequent Barcelona Convention (1990), while Anatheia Brooks and Stacy VanDeveer collected relevant contributions in *Saving the Seas: values, scientists, and international governance* (1997).

⁷⁴ Quoted from Raffestin (1986). See also p. 9. The concept of territory is close to that of “place” in American geography (Pred 1984).

⁷⁵ See, for instance, the Braudel’s quotation in footnote 109.

⁷⁶ On the Appalachians, see footnote 3, while on the Sierra Nevada, refer to Jörg Balsiger (2009, 2007).

Critical perspectives

*Ils quittent un à un le pays
Pour s'en aller gagner leur vie
Loin de la terre où ils sont nés...
Pourtant que la montagne est belle
Comment peut-on s'imaginer⁷⁷*

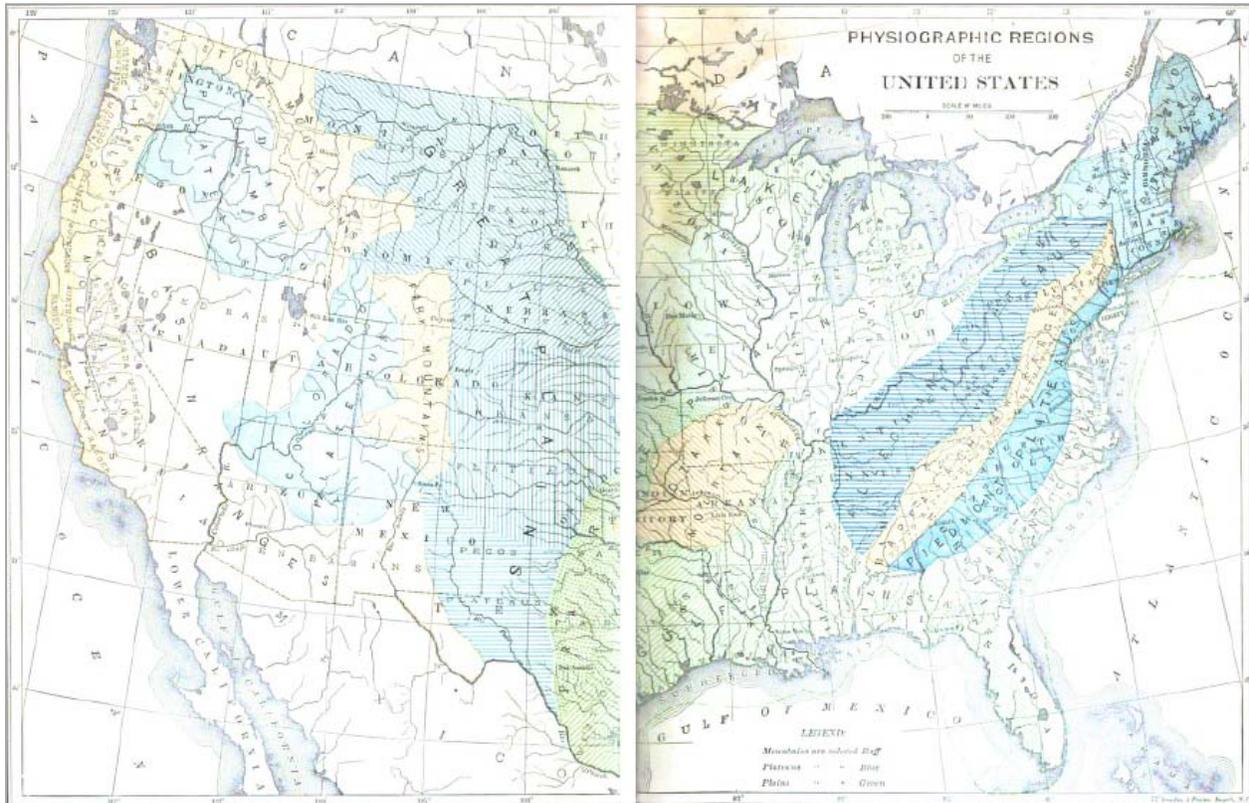


Figure 6: “Physiographic regions” of the United States proposed by John Wesley Powell (1895).

Ecoregionalism is hardly a new phenomenon. In the US, it is rooted both in rightwing conservationism, which dates back at least to the 19th century, and in the leftist counterculture of the 1970s, especially in California.⁷⁸ Also known as bioregionalism, it criticizes the apparent ignorance of environmental factors in the definition of administrative units, such as counties, states, and na-

⁷⁷ “One by one they leave the country / To go earn their lives / Far from the land where they were born... / But how beautiful are the mountains / How can you imagine.” Translated by the author and quoted from *La Montagne* by Jean Ferrat (1964).

⁷⁸ On 19th century conservationism in the US, see the life and works of Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau in New England, and John Muir in California. For echoes of the 1970s counterculture, read the writings, for instance, of the French Marxist André Gorz, who pinpointed the unsustainability not only of class exploitation, but also of the exploitation of nature intrinsic in the capitalist system, with the only difference that, if humans possess a certain degree of resistance over time, nature reacts to overexploitation as soon as certain thresholds are exceeded (1975, 1977). Further echoes are also found in the Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows 1972), as well as in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

tions: the typical example is the western part of the border with Canada, which simply follows the 49th parallel north,⁷⁹ or the borders of many western states, such as Colorado. It also emphasizes the role of ecoregions with regard to collective identity, the so-called “ecoidentity”, as if the inhabitants of the Alps or the Andes felt more connected by a sense of belonging to the same mountain range than, for example, to their respective nations. According to ecoregionalists, in the words of Bernard Debarbieux,

...the affective attachment to a bioregion results in virtuous practices with respect to the environment (inhabitants with a true citizen mentality would be more concerned for the territorial base with which they identify).⁸⁰

If interpreted as an exclusive relationship, this would be at odds with the growing number of collective identities and overlapping affiliations characterizing, for example, contemporary Europe, where multiple identities (place, as well as gender, age, ethnos, ethos, art, sport, etc.) are often the norm.⁸¹ However, if this relationship is inclusive instead of being exclusive, ecoregionalism could be interpreted as a single aspect of the general trend. More radical critiques of ecoregionalism are reported by William Wolmer (2003):

Bioregionalism has been criticised for its reductionist understanding of natural regions and undifferentiated human societies, its frequently ahistorical analysis, the environmental determinism of its simplistic nature-culture causal linkage, and its romanticised representation of “traditional” indigenous cultures living in harmony with the environment.⁸²

⁷⁹ See article 2 of the 1818 London Convention. Similar provisions define borders of many African counties, as well as of some states in the Arabian and Korean peninsulas and the island of New Guinea, and can be traced back to the 1494 Tordesillas Treaty. However, borders are never random (Guichonnet and Raffestin 1974; Mancebo 2001),

⁸⁰ Quoted from Debarbieux (2009).

⁸¹ See, in this regard, Hedley Bull (1977), Robert Cox (Cox 1996, 1986), John Ruggie (1993), Andrew Gamble (2007), and, for a perspective on mountains, Bernard Debarbieux (2009).

⁸² See Wolmer, quoting, in particular, Frenkel (1994). See also Robert Thayer’s *LifePlace* (2003).

While these *ex ante* critical perspectives certainly possess some elements of truth, they rarely do justice to the genuine sense of belonging to a specific territory, which may be felt within certain ecoregions, especially those which are divided by international borders, and might go beyond national sentiments. Moreover, these analyses could also be considered “ageographical”, and ultimately reductionist too. What we are left with in the literature, is a hiatus between the often harsh critiques of environmental determinism, on the one hand, and disenchanting perspectives on traditional cultures. Many generational elements transpire from these debates: post World War II scholars criticizing their often positivistic predecessors of the prewar period, today’s students revising the oft economic literature of the second half of the 20th century from constructivist angles, etc. There is one tension, in particular, which seems to resist to time, *i.e.*, the relation between social-historical and environmental-geographical factors and perspectives, which remains problematic in debates over ecoregionalism.

*Et eunt homines mirari alta montium, et
ingentes fluctus maris, et latissimos lapsus
fluminum, et Oceani ambitum, et gyros
siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos.*⁸³

Ecoregional initiatives between systems and fields

Two powerful images are often used in the literature with regard to society, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other. In the case of society, the image is that of a “field” (in French: *champ*);⁸⁴ in the case of the environment, it is a “system.” Of course, the latter analogy has oft been employed with regard to society too (e.g., economic system, international system, etc.). However, the two images correspond to two different epistemologies, the former reflecting a more critical perspective than the more positivistic one of the latter. In ecology, the use of the term ecosystem is particularly common, but the concept of “system” is rarely problematized.⁸⁵ Robert Jervis certainly belongs to the category of those who, in the 1990s, contributed most significantly to the reflection on this concept in international relations, by drawing his inspiration from the systemic theory developed by Kenneth Waltz.⁸⁶ Jervis defines a system in the following classical manner:

*We are dealing with a system when (a) a set of units or elements is interconnected so that changes in some elements or their relations produce changes in other parts of the system, and (b) the entire system exhibits properties and behaviors that are different from those of the parts.*⁸⁷

A system is thus defined by an environment, a set, units and interactions. In a system, all the units are linked to one another by the structure of the system. So, every action reverberates not only with the other units, but also with the unit that initiated the action, that is, the agent. For that reason, we

⁸³ “And men go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, the mighty billows of the sea, the broad tides of rivers, the compass of the ocean, and the circuits of the stars, and pass themselves by.” Translated by the Edward Pusey (1838) and quoted from the original version (397 *ca.*).

⁸⁴ This is not to be confused with the “logic of images” in international relations, that is the use by Kenneth Waltz in the classical *Man, the State, and War* of the term of “first image”, for the individual level of analysis, “second image”, for the national level, and “third image” for the international level (1959), which was often replicated in the literature, for example by Peter Gourevitch (1978). Another analogy which is often used is that of a play, of a game, such as in game theory, or of a network (which has oft been employed with regard to the environment too), such as defined by Manuel Castells (2000).

⁸⁵ See, for instance, Viazzo (1989).

⁸⁶ See *Theory of International Politics* (1979).

⁸⁷ Quoted from *System Effects* (1997).

speak of interaction and not of action, of interdependence and not of dependence.⁸⁸ Furthermore, systemic thinking fits into the tradition of structuralism, which explains a certain overlapping of the concepts of system and structure.⁸⁹

Jack Snyder identifies five dimensions, which have been developed by the general theory of systems and according to which systems can vary. A system can thus be stable or instable, open or closed, simple or complex, organized or disorganized, tightly or loosely coupled.⁹⁰ It goes without saying that, even in the positivist system of reference of systemism, some of these dimensions reveal, at least partially, a subjective character. One of the concepts derived from systemic analyses is that of “system effects.” Those refer, on the one hand, to the effects of the actions of the system as a whole, for instance those of its interactions with other systems or with the environment (effects of a system), like the process of osmosis between the system “root” and the environment “soil”; on the other, they correspond to the effects of the interactions of the units of the system with other units of the same system (effects within a system), which can be exemplified by the interactions between the units “trees” in the system “forest.” By definition, system effects are not only interdependent, but also nonlinear. System effects are constantly disproportionate to the actions that triggered them. At the same time, they do not depend only on the action that triggered them, but also on all the actions or reactions of every other unit of the system. The effects in a system are thus different from the effects outside of a system, in the environment, and they can be direct or indirect, primary or secondary.

We often distinguish between us, the subjects, humans, those who act, and the others, objects, “nature”, which are subjected to our actions. But according to Jervis, in a system, such a distinction does not hold, since a game between us and nature is never only a “game” between us and nature.⁹¹ For example, “plants and animals not only adapt to the environment, they change it.”⁹² If, in the system “nature” (the ecosystem), plants and animals (the biosphere) adapt to the environment, while changing it, we will never be able to speak of evolution, but always of coevolution. We often define nature as a mysterious force, since it is unpredictable to us, but if nature is a system and if our actions in nature imply some system effects, it loses its mysterious and unpredictable nature to simply become a system with non-linear and interdependent system effects, which we can thus apprehend. The same can be said of an ecoregion, especially with regard to its ecosystemic dimension. So, even if it presents some subjective elements, such as its degree of openness, the system analogy remains strongly associated with a positivistic epistemology, which remains more apt at interpreting physical phenomena than social ones.

The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu made the use of the concept of “field” fairly common.⁹³ The field analogy has a particular emphasis with relational elements in common with that of system.

⁸⁸ Closely related to each other, systemic and cybernetic approaches led to a proliferation of works that have already become classics of political science, namely Kaplan (1957), Deutsch (1963), Easton (1965), Wallerstein (1974, 1980), Keohane & Nye (1977), and Waltz (1979).

⁸⁹ In international relations, Robert Keohane underscores that the Waltz’s version of realism, which he defines as “structural realism”, develops a new concept *vis-à-vis* classical realism, *i.e.* that of “structure of the international system” (1986), characterized by anarchy, by the state nature of its units, and by the distribution of capabilities.

⁹⁰ See *Coping with Complexity in the International System* (1993).

⁹¹ The concept of game against nature, criticized by Jervis, derives from Game Theory and, especially, the works of Christos Papadimitriou, who defines nature as an actor acting randomly (1985). Jervis has often used game theory, but in a discursive and non formalized manner.

⁹² Quoted from Snyder and Jervis (1993).

⁹³ See Bourdieu (1992, 1994).

However, it is used in a less deterministic and more plural manner.⁹⁴ According to this analogy, a field, such as the economic or the environmental field, or a subfield, such as a scholarly discipline or a foreign ministry, enjoys relative autonomy from other fields. Its agents, such as economists or diplomats, are able to detach themselves from external interests: they are recognized by their peers for their ability to do so; they distinguish themselves as professionals; they play their games according to the internal rules of the field. A field must therefore fulfill certain conditions to exist, and possesses certain properties. All fields are delimited by borders, but they are also endowed with certain degree of openness. Activists within an NGO, for example, are not isolated from ideas coming from elsewhere. On the basis of their position in the field, dominant agents oppose themselves to dominated ones, and can position themselves as guardians of the establishment, or subversive elements thereof. These dispositions result from historical trajectories, which make it possible for a certain agent to occupy a specific position in space during a certain period of time;⁹⁵ also, these dispositions are associated with the acceptance of what is at stake: academic prestige, economic development, military power, environmental protection, etc. These are symbolic values, in the common sense of the term, from which the rules of the game are derived and which are subsequently taken from granted.⁹⁶

It goes without saying that the lesser intellectual boldness of the concept of field reflects the greater operational caution of the social sciences, which are confronted with reactive subjects and changing behaviors. So, the field analogy can be used as a critical tool with regard to, for example, the social dimension of an ecoregional initiative, such as a regional environmental agreement. Elements from both the system and the field analogy will be used in this text, bearing in mind the different epistemological positions behind these two intellectual tools. It would be tempting to try an integrative approach that would encompass both perspectives, but the risk of ending with a reductionist approach is too high. By attempting a grand theory, integrating both social and environmental aspects, there is a high risk of missing a critical aporia in the ecoregional concept, instead of fully appraising it, as we are trying to do here.

A historical perspective

Ecoregionalism not being new phenomenon, a historical perspective can help understand it. In this part of the text, we look at what is known as the process of “ecoregionalization”, outlining its milestones. This reconstruction is based on primary sources, in particular on a comprehensive survey of existing regional environmental agreements, as the secondary literature is sparse and fragmented.⁹⁷ In fact, there are contributions on the history of joint river commissions or sea regional agreements, particularly of individual processes, but a thorough history of ecoregional agreements is still missing.⁹⁸ For the sake of clarity, the proposed overview includes binding international

⁹⁴ For a critique of excessively “structural” readings of Bourdieusian sociology, see Philippe Corcuff, who emphasized its pluralistic and anti-systemic import *vis-à-vis* the excessive weight given to social classes by structural Marxists (2003).

⁹⁵ These specific dispositions are embodied experiences and coincide with another Bourdieusian concept, that of “*habitus*.” For further reading, see Bourdieu (1972).

⁹⁶ These are related to the Bourdieusian concept of “*doxa*” (1979).

⁹⁷ The survey was based on the information available on the online database of the *United Nations Treaty Series*, on the website of UNEP and on several other websites. A synopsis of the results of the survey can be seen in Figure 7, while Figure 8 shows the growth in the number of regional environmental agreements over the years.

⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the entry on “Regional Governance and Environmental Problems” in the *International Studies Encyclopedia*, while it provides a broad overview of the relevant literature, does not contain a historical overview of the ecoregionalization process (Balsiger and VanDeever 2010).

agreements only, ignoring phenomena such as voluntary processes (such as fora, networks, etc.) or ecoregional initiatives at the subnational level (such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, etc.).⁹⁹ Moreover, for ordering reasons, the agreements are clustered according to the type of ecoregion (i.e., rivers, lakes, seas, and mountains). This allows to render the outline manageable, but this will not substantially affect the results, as it will become evident by the end of the perusal.

River basin agreements are arguably at the roots of modern international organization, with the creation, in 1816, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, of the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR). The Danube followed several decades later when, in 1856, at the end of the Crimean War, the now International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) was institutionalized, with a special commission for the Danube Delta, which was created in 1918, again, after the close of World War I. When they do not cross several countries, which happens oftentimes, major rivers are frequently used as natural borders;¹⁰⁰ they represent invaluable sources of freshwater, with pollution flowing from upland to lowland countries; they constitute, as well, key axes for transportation, as routes or as impediments thereof (hence bridges, levees, etc.). River basins are, therefore, strategic matter for any nation, and their management is a key security issue. For this reason, it is not surprising to find that the earliest examples of international organization followed the end of a major war and revolved around river basins. If institutionalized cooperation is seen as a manner to substitute occasional conflict with ongoing dialogue, the joint management of river basins represented an opportunity to engage the parties in such a practice. In previous centuries, an upland power blocking or polluting water flowing into the territory of a lowland neighbor could be cause of war; nowadays, instead, states would rather create river commissions to reach a technical solution at the ecoregional level or could recur to international arbitration.¹⁰¹ Despite the occasional scare for water “wars”,¹⁰² since diplomacy has prevailed as the shared method to solve disputes over water courses, no full scale water conflict has materialized yet, nor seems at the horizon. Since the beginning of the 20th century, joint river, lake, “freshwater” commissions were created also outside of Europe, representing now a common form of institutionalized cooperation. By 2003, at the time of our survey, fifty-seven river and lake agreements of this kind were identified in each continent, leaving few major international water courses without their own commission. Since the end of World War II, the number of agreements has grown constantly, with peaks in the 1970s and in the 1990s, following a general trend, which is shared with other types of ecoregions.

Regional sea agreements are less numerous than joint river commissions and came about much later. Despite the fact that for several centuries various powers, such as the Republic of Venice, claimed their dominion over different parts of the sea, such as the Adriatic Sea, as if was their own territory,¹⁰³ and despite a UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (dealing mainly with rights of use and passage), had been negotiated at least since the 1950s, it is not until 1974 and 1976, respectively, that the first two sea agreements, the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Baltic Sea and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution,

⁹⁹ Moreover, the general agreements on transboundary cooperation, for instance, on water management between two or more countries are not considered (e.g. the Hungarian-Romanian Hydrotechnical Convention), unless they correspond to a specific ecoregion (e.g. a river, a sea, etc.).

¹⁰⁰ See *supra*.

¹⁰¹ Such as in the case of Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam between Hungary and Slovakia, settled in 1997 by the International Court of Justice, or in the recent pulp mill dispute between Argentina and Uruguay.

¹⁰² See, for example, Ohlsson (1995), Klare (2001), and Solomon (2010).

¹⁰³ See, in particular, the writings of Paolo Sarpi, as well as the classical debate, which revolved around trade issues, between the proponents of the *mare claustrum* (Selden) and those of the *mare liberum* (Grotius).

were signed. The Helsinki and Barcelona Conventions represent two milestones in the history of regional environmental agreements, because environmental issues are addressed for the first time directly, particularly marine pollution and international monitoring.¹⁰⁴ Previous agreements, in fact, did not possess the distinctly environmental character of these two. An essential role, in this sense, was played by the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in 1972 in Stockholm, which was the first of its kind and which led to the creation of UNEP, headquartered in Nairobi. In line with the counterculture environmentalism of the 1970s, UNEP acted as a catalyzer for ecoregionalism, creating as early as in 1974 a “Regional Seas Programme.” The success of this program was immediate, leading to the conclusion, by 2003, of seventeen regional seas conventions throughout the world.¹⁰⁵ However, this success did not come without consequences: the first nine agreements were concluded within a span of twelve years only; critics argue that UNEP overplayed its role, imposing premade treaties that were not fully negotiated by the parties involved and using these conventions as an opportunity to organize conferences, acquire visibility, attract donors, and raise funds (that were scarce); some critics blame Mostafa Tolba, the charismatic Executive Director of UNEP since 1976, for his role in the development of the program, observing that, after the end of his mandate in 1992, only four conventions were finalized. As if many seas were left without!¹⁰⁶

A recent and anomalous development with regard to regional environmental agreements concerns mountain ranges, a mayor type of ecoregion where specific conventions are still generally missing. Like rivers, lakes, and seas, mountains also play a strategic role in the defense of the territory of many nations, often coinciding with historical boundaries, as well as corresponding to reservoirs of freshwater, biodiversity, and wilderness; unlike other types of ecoregions, though, mountains are usually inhabited, always representing an integral part of the territory of a country. While people live only along a river or the coast, people do inhabit mountain regions. Nowadays, even the highest peaks were conquered by humanity.¹⁰⁷ While living “uphill” represents a challenge that can stimulate human ingenuity,¹⁰⁸ mountain communities have often been seen as deprived and underdeveloped.¹⁰⁹ All over the world, poverty levels are systematically higher in mountain regions than in the adjacent lowlands. Paradoxically, the peripherality of mountains often kept these ecoregions, at the same time, on the top of political agendas, as far as national security is concerned, and closer to the bottom, as long as they were considered, looked at from the lowlands, to be at the margins of social and economic development. However, by the early 1990s, ecoregionalism had also reached the mountains, corresponding to a “new age” of concern for the environment. The first regional mountain agreement, the Convention for the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention), was

¹⁰⁴ On the Helsinki Convention, see Stacy VanDeever (2004), while on the Barcelona Convention, see Peter Haas, also on the role of international monitoring and “epistemic communities” (1990, 1992).

¹⁰⁵ The terms “treaty”, “agreement”, and “convention” are synonyms and can be used indifferently. However, the use of the term “convention” is particularly common with regard to regional environmental agreements.

¹⁰⁶ These observations are based on private conversations, held in 2008 and 2009, with high level United Nations senior officials, who participated in UNEP’s endeavors and spoke under condition of anonymity. Similar comments can be found in Haas (1990).

¹⁰⁷ See, in this regard, the fascinating pages by Gian Piero Motti (1993) and Luigi Zanzi (2004). The same cannot be said yet, for example, by the depths of the oceans.

¹⁰⁸ See also the anthropological perspective of Pier Paolo Viazzo (1989), which seriously challenges Robert Netting’s view of an Alpine village as a closed system (1981), demonstrating, *inter alia*, the remarkable contribution of mountain regions to “high” culture.

¹⁰⁹ In an oft quoted passage, Fernand Braudel condemned mountain regions as “a world apart from civilizations, which are an urban and lowland achievement. Their history is to have none, to remain almost always on the fringe of the great waves of civilization, even the longest and most persistent” (1972). Paradoxically, for centuries mountains and hilltops served as refuge from the lack of security and sanitation of the lowlands, as witnessed by historical settlements in Europe, at least until early modern times.

finalized in 1991.¹¹⁰ However, unlike the seas ecoregionalization process, UNEP was only marginal to the Alpine Convention, which was mainly developed endogenously at the European level. The signature of the Alpine Convention generated a certain enthusiasm at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), held in 1992 in Rio, which led to a specific chapter on mountains being included in the Agenda 21.¹¹¹ However, the momentum was partially lost, also as the ratification process of the framework convention and its implementing protocols proceeded slowly.¹¹²

A second milestone for the mountain ecoregionalization process is represented by the decision of the UN General Assembly to declare 2002 International Year of Mountains.¹¹³ This gave visibility to the process and, due to the lack of initiative on behalf of UNEP, which had not proceeded to the creation of a “Regional Mountain Programme”,¹¹⁴ this led to the launching, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held the same year in Johannesburg, of the International Mountain Partnership, a voluntary alliance of governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector (not a binding agreement, nor a UN agency, program, or fund). This initiative was immediately followed by the finalization, in 2003, of a second regional mountain agreement, the Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Mountain Region (Carpathian Convention), the most recent concrete development in this ongoing ecoregionalization process.¹¹⁵ In this case, UNEP was actively involved since the very beginning and is now hosting the Interim Secretariat of the convention. UNEP is currently supporting the development of conventions in other mountain regions, such as the Balkans and the Caucasus, which are in an advanced negotiation stage, but which present areas recently exposed to military conflict, clearly representing an obstacle to negotiations (*i.e.*, Bosnia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, etc.). Interestingly, UNEP is doing so more in its capacity as Environmental Reference Centre of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, than as a pilot UNEP regional program. While this signals a change in the role of UNEP towards regional environmental agreements in general, at least since Tolba left, the example of river basins and of the Alpine Convention, which developed independently, demonstrates the potential for ecoregional initiatives also outside UNEP. In mountain regions, specific conventions are generally missing, and the potential for new initiatives is high.

¹¹⁰ For an introduction to the Alpine Convention, see, in particular, Martin Price (2000, 1999), as well as the various publications by its Permanent Secretariat (2003, 2004) and the different contributions by the national delegations (Kolar-Planinsic 1998; Angelini, Ventura, and Martini 2006; CIPRA France 2008; Galle 2007; CIPRA Deutschland 2008). On the convention design and for comparative reflections on cooperation in the Mediterranean, see the contributions by the author at the 2009 ISA annual convention (2009, 2009).

¹¹¹ “Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development” (Chapter 13).

¹¹² Following a scheme, which is extremely common for multilateral environmental agreements, such as the 1976 Barcelona Convention and its 1980 Athens Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol, or the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity and its 2000 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

¹¹³ Document A/RES/53/24 of November 19, 1998. The International Year of Mountains was accompanied by a wave of interest for mountain regions, especially by international lawyers (Treves, Pineschi, and Fodella 2004, 2002; Villeneuve, Castelein, and Mekouar 2002).

¹¹⁴ The reference to a Mountain Programme in UNEP/WCMC (2002) was incorrect. See also the reply by UNEP’s Harald Egerer to Clara Nobbe’s question, posted on the website *Ask Today’s Expert* on February 28, 2008.

¹¹⁵ For the relevant documentation, see *A Collection on the Carpathian Convention*, edited by the author (2008), as well as REC’s handbook (2007). For a comparison of the Alpine and the Carpathian conventions, see the edited volume by Balázs Majtényi and Gianfranco Tamburelli (2009).

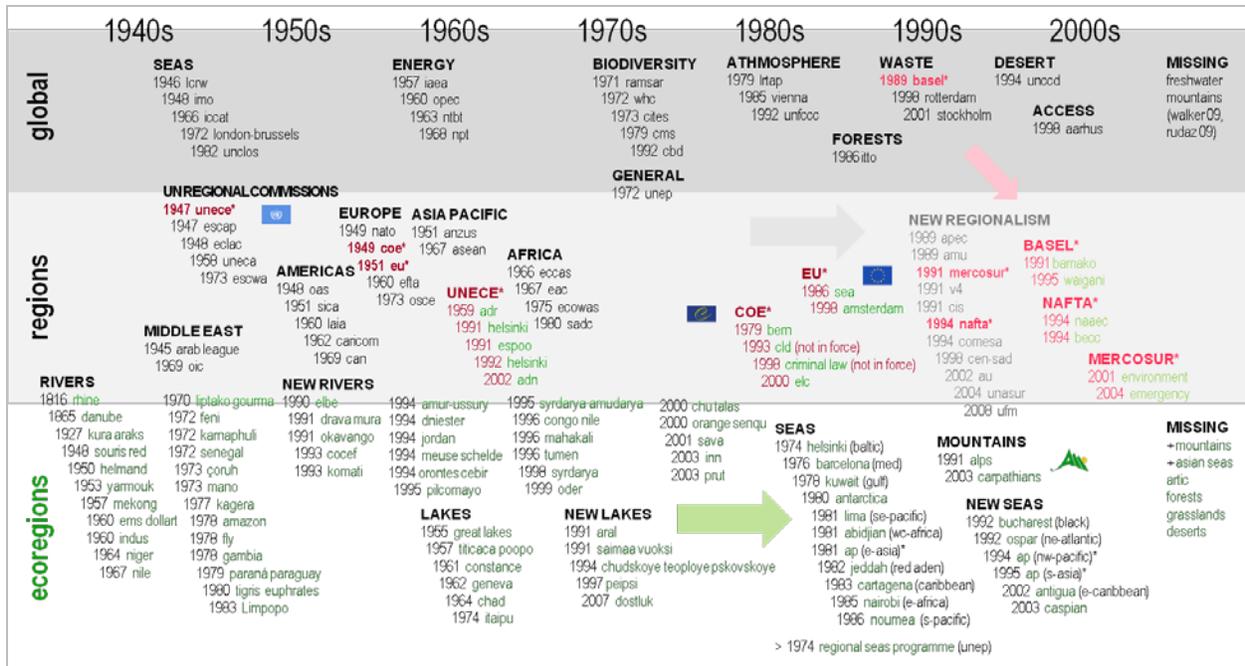


Figure 7: A synopsis of the process of ecoregionalization (binding international agreements only).

So, by the time of our survey, a total number of seventy-six regional environmental agreements could be identified. Of course, some conventions are missing, some are probably no longer operational; some agreements are very active, and some are likely dormant.¹¹⁶ It is also clear that some conventions, especially those predating the 1970s, have little to do with the ecoregional movement and ecoregionalism as an ideology, being more linked to security or economic concerns. Still, it is clear that these conventions represent a dense crowd of international agreements on environmental issues. Another aspect that emerges from this perusal is the impressive growth in the number of agreements, which allows us to identify two turning points, which are in line with the vast literature on international environmental relations:¹¹⁷ the 1970s and the Stockholm Conference and the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the Earth Summit. Another turning point could be represented by the second half of the 2000s, which saw a sharp decline in the number of new agreements, also at the global level. Some call it “treaty fatigue”, while others argue that the re-

¹¹⁶ For an almost complete database on international environmental agreements, see Ron Mitchell (2002-2010). Moreover, even if it goes beyond the scope of this text, many of these conventions produce or induce regional environmental outlooks, such as the Alpine Convention’s *Report on the State of the Alps* (2006-2009) or UNEP’s *Carpathian Environment Outlook* (2007), which could be used to assess their impact on society and the environment. In 2008, the Governing Council of UNEP interestingly called for an overview of international environmental assessments at the national, regional, and global level. Two reports were presented by the Executive Director in 2009 (documents UNEP/GC.25/INF/12 and UNEP/GC.25/INF/12/Add.1). The assessments on which the reports are based are available on the UNEP/PEARL website. I am immensely indebted to Arthur Dahl for introducing me to this process. Other documents that might be useful for this purpose are the outcomes of compliance procedures, such as the first report of the Alpine Convention’s Compliance Committee (document X/B2, 2009). On the effectiveness of international environmental agreements, see Oran Young (1999), Edward Miles (2002), Ron Mitchell (2006), and the recent paper bringing together the efforts of various groups working on this topic (Breitmeier, Underdal, and Young 2009). I am extremely grateful also towards William Clark for those references.

¹¹⁷ See, for instance, Haas, Keohane & Levy (1993), Young (2002), or O’Neill (2009).

quired institutions are already there. The general sentiment is, however, that there is much room for improvement, especially as far as coordination is concerned. It is clear that a historical process is in motion and that some issues and regions are still missing. Mountain regions are surely among them.

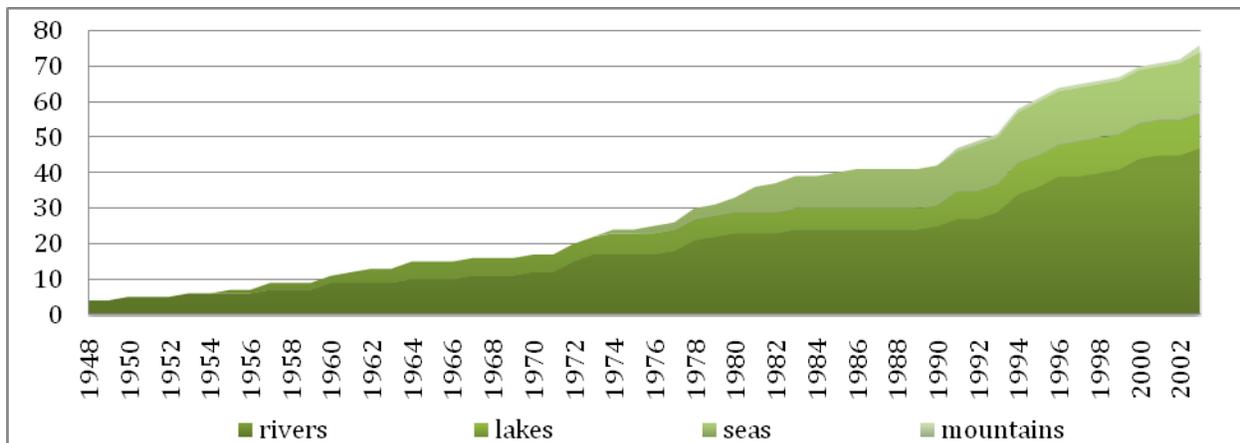


Figure 8: The number of binding international agreements by type of ecoregion.

An example and a counterexample of ecoregional initiatives

Once *ex ante* critical perspectives on ecoregionalism and an *ex post* historical reconstruction of the milestones of the ecoregionalization process were introduced, an example from mountain regions of how ecoregionalism affects nations in their relations is here presented, together with a counterexample. The first example concerns the Alpine Convention, a fairly typical regional environmental agreement,¹¹⁸ while the second example regards the Andean Community (CAN), a relatively standard regional integration organization that is usually not considered an environmental initiative, but which also identifies itself with a mountain range.¹¹⁹ As far as the Alpine Convention is concerned, the following reading is based on existing literature, on informal conversations with several participants, as well as, on the direct involvement of the author.¹²⁰ Regarding the CAN, the literature being abundant but sometimes outdated, the author relied on a series of interviews with privileged observers to complement the literature. While these sources are usually not referred to directly, the interviews represent an invaluable source of relevant insights.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ For a general bibliography on the Alpine Convention, see footnote 110.

¹¹⁹ For a general introduction from a legal standpoint, see, *inter alia*, Jorge Quindimil (2006); for a geographical and economic perspective, see the recent publications by the CAN (2009; Moncayo Jiménez 2003); on the origins of the process, see the memoirs of Mauricio Guerrero (1979), together with the interviews in the journal *CAF* (Cabrera Ferrada 1991; Lleras Restrepo 1992); for the debate on the state of the CAN, see the proceedings edited by Heinrich Meyer and Consuelo Ahumada (2006); finally, for a comparative outlook between the CAN and the Amazon Treaty, see Elizabeth Ferris (1981) and, recently, Kathryn Hochstetler (2010).

¹²⁰ The author is solely responsible for any misrepresentation of the state of play.

¹²¹ Concerning the Andean Community, the interviews were held in March 2010 in Lima, Peru, at the Andean Community Secretariat, the Peruvian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Environment, the Chilean, Ecuadorian and Brazilian Embassies, as well as at the headquarters of some national and international NGOs. Interviews and contacts with privileged observers were also held telephonically with other institutions active in the Andean region, such as the Argentinean Ministry of the Environment in Buenos Aires and the Mountain Partnership in Rome. Support of Harvard University's Center for International Development and the Italian Ministry for Land, Environment and Sea is, once more, gratefully acknowledged.

As a preliminary observation, it is important to bear in mind the system and field images. In fact, as systems of relations among nations as well as ecosystems, they both present a certain level of interconnectedness (*i.e.*, variations of certain elements produce variations in other parts) and behave differently as a whole than as the sum of their parts (e.g., the member states). As such, on the institutional side, for example, they both possess a certain degree of stability and openness, they are relatively complex and organized, and their parts can be tightly or loosely coupled, depending on the issue. They both produce system effects, which are nonlinear by definition (e.g., crises and sudden changes), and evolve together with their respective environments, which can range from melting glaciers to ongoing elections. Moreover, as fields, both are relatively autonomous from other fields, such as the EU, indigenous movements, or mountain ecology. Both present agents that are able, with different degrees of success, to detach themselves from external interests, that are recognized by their peers, and that abide by internal rules, such as diplomatic conventions. The dispositions of the agents result from historical trajectories that can place them in relatively dominant positions, such as the skilled negotiator that participated for years in the process *vis-à-vis* the newcomer. Finally, those dispositions are associated with the acceptance of what is at stake, which can vary over time and which can range from preventing the overexploitation of the Alps by the tourist industry or the Andes by the mining sector to advancing the professional careers of the agents involved or building confidence among rival nations.

The following remarks on the Alpine Convention follow an order that roughly corresponds to the main questions raised when trying to define ecoregions from the different perspectives of ecology, geography, political science, and international relations. From these perspectives, a series of key issues emerged that help understanding the ecoregional phenomenon. In particular, the ecology literature raised the question of the presence of an ecosystem of reference or geographical landmark. Also, does the attachment to a particular realm or the allegiance to a specific discipline play a role in the definition of an ecoregion? Is it characterized by a distinctive human-environment system? Geographers inquired if it is physical environments that determine societal configurations or *vice versa* and if it is the use of space by economic agents or its representation by social groups that determines what a region is. In the political literature, the question if regions are the product of a center-periphery cleavage emerges. Regions are a manifestation of communitarianism or of globalism? Are they a product of functional pressures on central institutions? The role of local mobilizations is also inquired.

The discipline of international relations looked at the phenomenon of international regionalism with particular attention, raising several questions that help define the phenomenon itself. Is there a geographical relationship? Is there mutual interdependence? Are there strategic alliances or alignments? How does the balancing of power function? Is there a hegemon? These questions also point out to collateral phenomena such as free riding and spillover effects, as well as common assumptions, such as the deepening of integration and the reduction of transaction costs. Looking more at the drivers of the international regionalism, the literature asks if there is a preexisting sense of community, if it is a product of communicative efforts by a particular group, and if there are normative means for political action. Moreover, looking at the states involved, key questions to ask are what the level of national coherence and what the type of regime is. Finally, sectorial flows also play a role in defining regions.

The case of the Alpine Convention

The ecosystem of reference for the Alpine Convention corresponds to the mountain range known as the Alps. While there is a certain difference, for instance, between the icy mountain peaks of the Jungfrau in the Swiss Alps and mild Mediterranean forests of the Mercantour National Park in France, the whole mountain range is usually considered to be a single ecosystem. WWF, for exam-

ple, identifies temperate coniferous forests as the main trait unifying the region.¹²² In the mid 1990s, to contribute to the conservation of this specific environment, the parties to the Alpine Convention adopted an Environmental Protection Protocol and a Mountain Forest Protocol.¹²³ Moreover, the Alps represent a key geographic landmark, present in most physical maps of Europe and defining the border of several states (Northern Italy, Southern Germany, etc.). This bears consequences also for the purpose of national defense, with many states having developed specific corps for Alpine regions (e.g., the *alpini* in Italy, the *chasseurs alpins* in France, etc.).

While transport flows within the region are significant, the Alps represent a barrier to transalpine flows, especially between Northern and Southern Europe.¹²⁴ Also in this sector, in 2000, the parties adopted a legal instrument, the Transport Protocol, after a decade of negotiations.¹²⁵ Another key sector for the economy of the region is represented by tourism, which is particularly linked to winter sports. Tourism poses similar challenges throughout the region, from the easy access to ski resorts from the main cities to the sustainable use of water and energy for the maintenance of ski trails if snow is scarce.¹²⁶ On this sector, at the end of the 1990s, the parties adopted, again, a Tourism Protocol.¹²⁷

¹²² See, for reference, Figure 1. See also Bätzing (1992) and, for a division of the Alps in different biogeographical provinces or natural units, see again Bätzing (2005).

¹²³ The Protocol on Environmental Protection and Landscape Management, also known as Protocol on Conservation of Nature and the Countryside, was opened to signature in 1994 in Chambéry, France, and has been ratified by all parties except Italy, Switzerland, and the EU. The Protocol on Mountain Forests, instead, was opened to signature in 1996 in Brdo, Slovenia, and still awaits ratification by Italy, Switzerland, and Monaco.

¹²⁴ For a more thorough analysis of the flows generated by Alpine transport, see the first volume of the *Report on the State of the Alps* (2007); see also the early OECD case study (1999), as well as the analyses by the Costs Subgroup of the Alpine Convention (2007). For a historical perspective on the crossing of the Alps, see Bernard Debarbieux (2002).

¹²⁵ The Protocol on Transport was opened to signature in 2000 in Lucerne, Switzerland, and was ratified by Austria, Germany, France (with reservation), Liechtenstein, Monaco, and Slovenia. This protocol is arguably the most contentious instrument produced by the Alpine Convention, because it provides that the parties “shall refrain from constructing any new, large-capacity roads for transalpine transport” (article 11). This provision is fiercely opposed by economic agents on the basis that it would hamper national development. On the debate on the ratification process and the practical consequences of the protocol, see, in particular, Albane Geslin (2008), and, in the same book, Philippe Juen .

¹²⁶ See the recent example of the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games (Austen and Branch 2010).

¹²⁷ The Protocol on Tourism was opened to signature in 1998 in Bled, Slovenia, and has been ratified by all parties except Italy and Switzerland. For an introduction to tourism in the Alps, see Debarbieux (1995), Salsa (2005) and, recently, Machiavelli (2009); for an analysis of the transport issues related to the tourist sector, see the contributions by the Transport Working Group of the Alpine Convention (2009, 2009, 2008). For a contribution on the Tourism Protocol, see Marie Anne Guérin (1996) and, more recently, Grégory Mollion (2008).

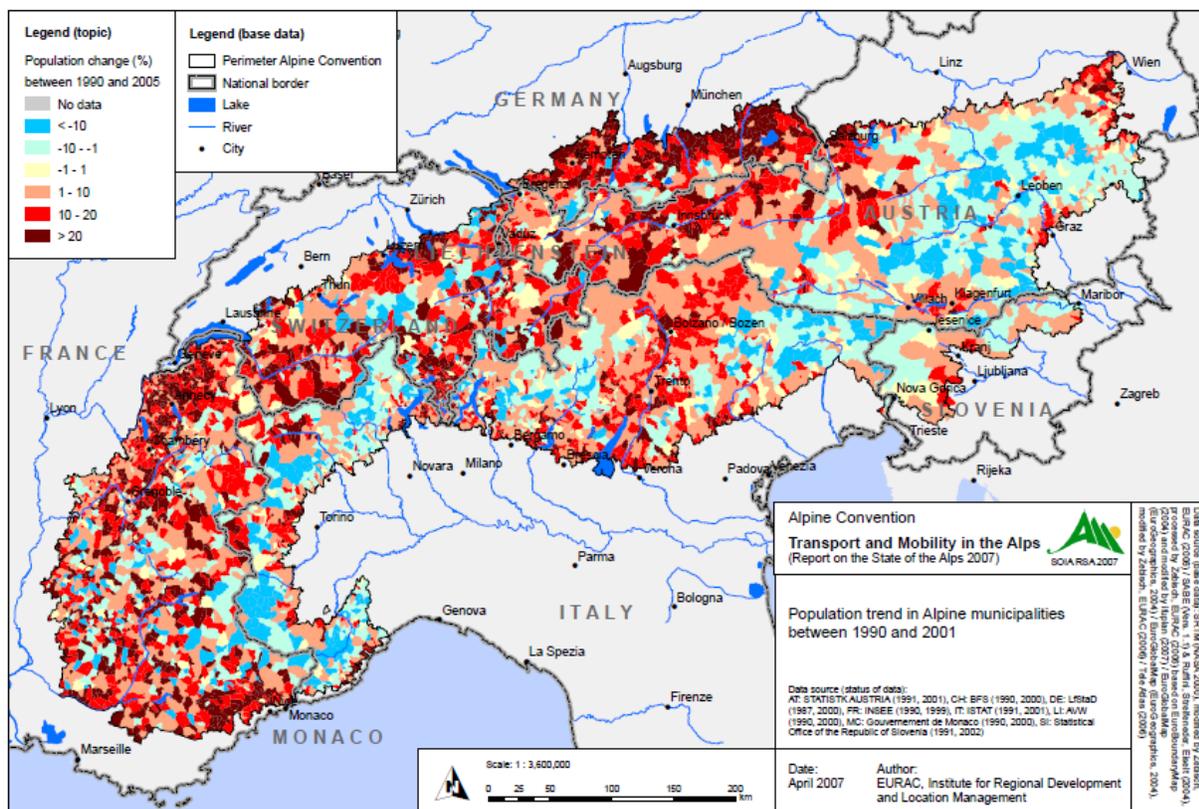
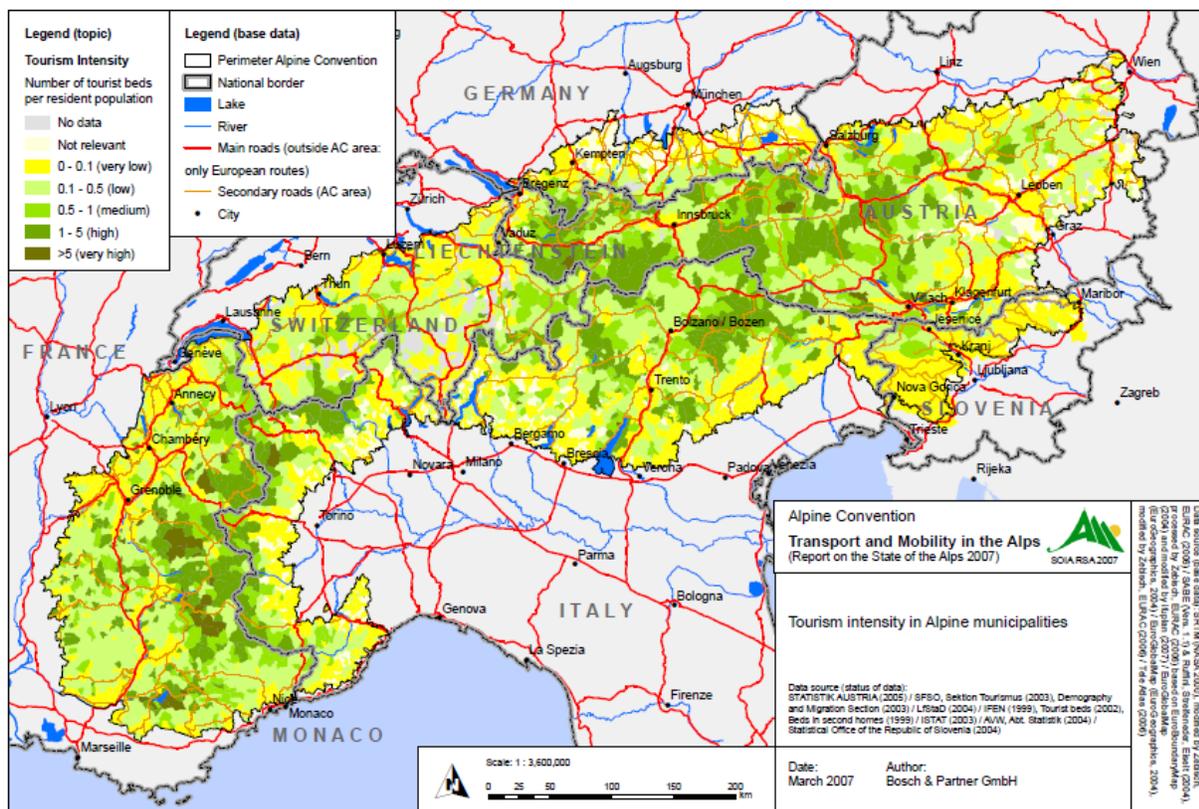


Figure 9: Tourism intensity data and population trend in the Alps.

However, the Alpine region presents significant differences.¹²⁸ Some of them have already been mentioned, for instance, the different perspectives between countries, such as France or Italy, that see the Alps also as a barrier to commercial flows between Northern and Southern Europe, and countries, such as Austria or Switzerland, that are concerned with intralpine flows. Also, even if each country has its own tourist destinations, the activity is not equally intensive in each part of the Alps. Most significantly, income distribution and demographic trends vary remarkably across the region, with diminishing tendencies in the Italian (except along the Adige Valley) and Austrian Alps (except in Tyrol) and around the Uri Canton (in Switzerland), contrasted with increasing trends especially in the French and Central Alps, along the Brenner axis between Italy and Germany.¹²⁹ Not to mention the cultural and linguistic differences that exist across the Alpine Arc, which have significant impacts also at the negotiation level.¹³⁰

Because of these differences, some commentators have criticized the process because it is undriven, for example, by transboundary environmental problems, such as pollution. Those criticisms do only partial justice to mountain initiatives, because the physical conformation is so that peak to peak flows are limited and, for example, pollution tends to flow from mountain tops to lowlands, often within the same country. However, in its constant search for common issues possessing distinctive features at the Alpine level (*i.e.*, that can be dealt with regionally in a manner that is nationally impracticable), towards the end of the 2000s, also in response to such criticisms, the Alpine Convention has started focusing its efforts on themes such as water management and climate change.¹³¹ Not that sectorial flows changed dramatically. Ski trails still absorb a terrific amount of water and still depend on the presence of snow and the persistence of glaciers. But while the transport and tourist industries are intrinsically human and *can* still be managed within the traditional frameworks (local, national, European, etc.) with minimum levels of Alpine coordination, melting glaciers and river basins are physical phenomena that, despite anthropic interactions, evolve virtually irrespective of national borders and *can hardly* be managed through traditional institutions. From this perspective, the Alpine Convention acts as an enabling factor, also contributing to the re-

¹²⁸ See the wealth of information collected by Ulrike Tappeiner and presented in the *Mapping the Alps* (2008; 2008).

¹²⁹ The Ministerial Conference of the Alpine Convention (Alpine Conference) has recently created an intergovernmental Working Group to study these issues (decision X/B4, 2009). See also Viazzo (1989) and Bätzing (1996).

¹³⁰ After half a decade of failed negotiations, the Alpine Conference adopted, in 2006, a Population and Culture Declaration (not a Protocol). For further reference on cultural dynamics in the Alps, see the outcomes of the DIAMONT project (Boesch 2007, 2007). On language issues, see the contribution by Paolo Angelini and the author (2008).

¹³¹ On water management, see the second volume of the *Report on the State of the Alps* (2009), the proceedings of the three water conferences (Innsbruck 2006, Munich 2008, and forthcoming Venice 2010), and the activities of the newly created Water Platform of the Alpine Convention. On climate change in the Alps, instead, see the 2006 Climate Declaration and the 2009 Climate Action Plan; see also the recent report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) (2009); more generally, on climate change in mountain regions, see the report prepared for the Copenhagen Conference by the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Berne (Kohler and Maselli 2009). The two topics are closely connected and references to water issues are frequent in climate literature and *vice versa*.

Similarly, the issue of biodiversity and ecological networks was also revived within the convention process through the integration of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC) within the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention in 2006 (Kohler, Scheurer, and Ullrich 2009), the creation of an Ecological Network Platform in 2007 (Hedden-Dunkhorst, Kretschmar, and Kohler 2007), and the launching of a specific European project (ECONNECT), and the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2008. However, the topic had long been treated in the 1994 Nature Protection Protocol and in the 2004 study on Alpine flora and fauna (Onori 2004).

duction of transaction costs. For example, if an Alpine state wished to produce a climate outlook on the Alps by itself, if the regular meetings did not take place and the permanent secretariat of the Alpine Convention did not exist to facilitate such initiatives, how much time would this country spend collecting information from other states, how many resources would be drawn into expensive consultancy, and how representative of the available knowledge would the final outcome really be? Not that the Alpine Convention is the black diamond of international frameworks, the key level that can perfectly manage climate and water, but it must be acknowledged that it has evolved towards these topics. However, it must also be recognized that these issues might reflect more the concerns of the lowlands, which are afraid of suffering in the long run from water scarcity for their fields and cities and of spoiling their ski holidays, than those of the highlands, which are usually more concerned with short term issues, such as employment and mobility.

It is often said that the Alpine Convention is a product of the capitals and not of the locals. The major Alpine NGO itself, CIPRA, does not miss a single opportunity to remind us that its four decades long work to promote an international framework for the conservation of the Alps succeeded involving the central governments (in the last twenty years), while it failed working with local authorities during its first two decades of existence.¹³² Because of its undeniable legacy and efforts, a certain ownership of the convention process often transpires from the participation of CIPRA, to the point that it sometimes happens that, by accident, even government officials refer to the Alpine Convention as if it was “the CIPRA convention.” However, a whole intergovernmental framework must not be confused with the laudable efforts of a single nongovernmental organization. The Alpine Convention itself is the product of a long trajectory and of a great variety of factors, which range from postwar conservationism to the environmental revival of the 1970s, from the creation of environmental institutions, such as UNEP and the national and subnational environmental ministries and agencies in the 1980s, to particular contingencies, such as electoral considerations, charismatic leaders, or natural disasters.

The locals certainly identify themselves with their mountains, but it would be an exaggeration to reduce their identity to this element alone. The myth of the isolated mountaineer has long been demystified by cultural anthropologists.¹³³ For example, national allegiances, linguistic areas, social practices, and religious creeds, all represent potential elements of identification of the self and definition of the other for locals. Differences between contiguous valleys can be staggering, while demarcations between the lower part of a valley and a neighboring city can be hard to identify. It is a truism to say that the Alps are shared by all their inhabitants, that the mountains unify all people living in the Alps. That they want or not, that they know it or not. However, it is not a cliché to argue that the mountains have represented a mobilizing factor for certain inhabitants, who represent themselves as mountain people, organizing themselves in civic or activist groups to pursue specific objectives. Many of these associations or networks came to existence at the Alpine level before the creation of the Alpine Convention, and the creation of many more was catalyzed by the convention itself. Not to count the several national and local initiatives, specific examples are the 19th century *alpine clubs*, CIPRA in the 1950s, the regional communities in the late 1970s (ARGEALP in the Central Alps, ALPEADRIA in the East, and COTRAO in the West), before the convention was

¹³² See, for instance, Martin Price (2000) or Andreas Götz (2008).

¹³³ Compare Netting’s depiction of the Walser village of Törbel, Switzerland, as a closed system (1981), with Viazzo’s perspective on the village of Alagna, Italy, which marks a turning point for the perception of Alpine settlements (1989).

launched, and the association of elected officials (AEM), the network of protected areas (ALPARC), the network of municipalities (Alliance in the Alps), after.¹³⁴

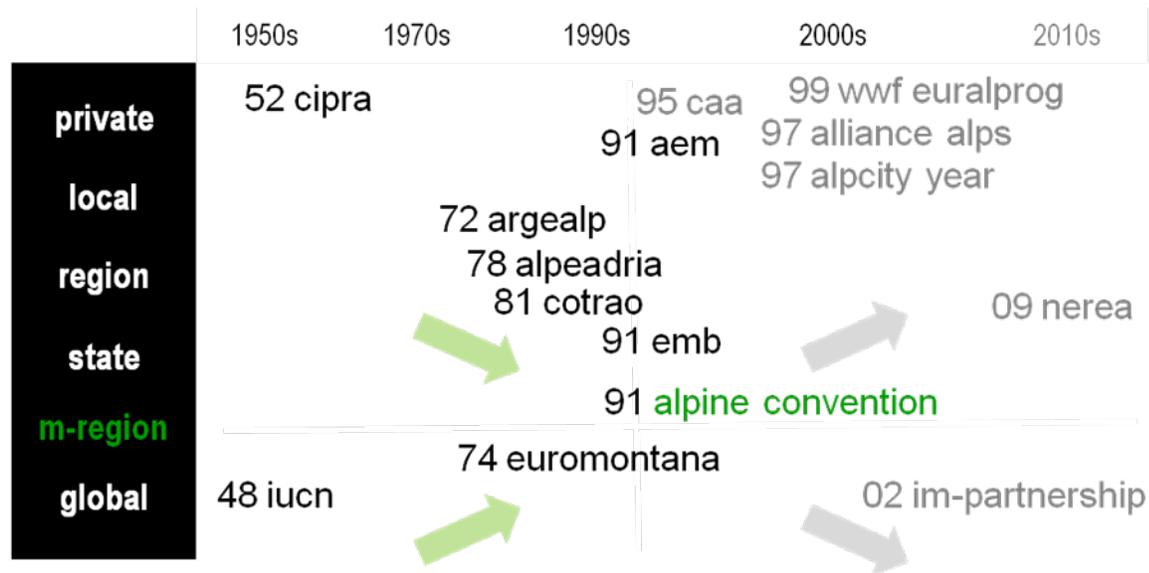


Figure 10: A synopsis of the main groups active at the Alpine level.

The means used by these groups involve normative circulation, and norms are used for political action. This can be true also at the governmental level. For instance, if the US create a Appalachian Regional Commission, why not do the same in the Alps? If the norm in the international community is to launch regional environmental agreements for the protection of the seas, why not do the same for mountains? These groups use a similar logic also on specific issues: if the UN are putting considerable efforts on biodiversity conservation, the Alpine Convention *must* do the same; if the international community is focusing on climate change, the Alpine Convention *must* do the same; if a group of scientific institutions is trying to better coordinate their research, the Alpine Convention *must* do so.¹³⁵ This often takes the form of a standardization process, also *vis-à-vis* other mountain regions that supposedly shall embrace the model of the Alpine Convention.¹³⁶ The example of the scientific community is particularly pregnant. Despite the fact that the Alps have been scrutinized for centuries and are among the best studied natural environments, mountain research is still embryonic, with a limited number of specialized researchers and very few specific institu-

¹³⁴ On mobilization in the Alpine region, see Françoise Gerbaux (2004), Andreas Gôtz (2004), and Cristina Del Biaggio (2009), specifically on environmental NGOs and networks; on the role of identity, see Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz (2008; 2009); specifically on participation in the Alpine Convention, read the contribution of the author together with Sabaheta Ramcilovic (2009).

¹³⁵ For a perspective on the international sources of domestic politics, see the classical piece by Peter Gourevitch (1978); more specifically, on norm diffusion, read Susan Park (2006), while on environmental convergence, see Katharina Holzinger *et al.* (2008); on the role of the UN on regional institutions, see Alan Henrikson (1995); specifically on mountains, see Annie Villeneuve *et al.* (2002) and Dinah Shelton (2004).

¹³⁶ On the Alpine Convention as a model for other regions, see Price (2000), Bâtzing (2003), and Balsiger (2007, 2008). On the design of the convention itself, see Walter Danz (1989, 1990; 1991) and the contribution by the author (2009). The Environmental Law Commission of IUCN played an important role in establishing standards for environmental agreements (Lausche 2008).

tions, such as research centers and scientific publications.¹³⁷ Despite this fact, it is not uncommon that activist groups, often composed by mountain researchers themselves and allied with some government delegations, invoke higher indisputable “scientific research” as the basis for their claims, for instance, on the urgency to protect large carnivores or to reduce the carbon footprint of the Alps, while the specific knowledge on these issues may be at best limited, if not controversial.¹³⁸

The negotiating weight in the Alpine Convention depends more on the institutional strength of the ministries of the environment of the parties than on traditionally understood economic power or political influence. Like in most environmental agreements, the representation of the parties is delegated to technical ministries instead of the ministries of foreign affairs, which usually play a minor role in the processes, with few exceptions, such as the French delegation to the Alpine Convention, which used to be lead jointly by the *Quay d’Orsay* together with the Ministry of Ecology. If this does not change the fundamental rules of the diplomatic game, this includes different agents, with different skill sets, different personal trajectories, and different interests. These are, generally speaking, young institutions, created between the 1970s and the 1990s and composed by a combination of biologists and other natural scientists, as well as economists, lawyers and other public administrators, with different levels of international experience; they possess different mandates, which are often associated with other issues, such as health, energy, or spatial planning; and they are organized in different manners, both functionally and territorially, with some ministries being strongly centralized, while others are territorially dispersed; fixed budgets and spending flexibility also vary significantly across the Alps. For instance, the German federal ministry is relatively small, and it is the Bavarian state ministry that is mainly competent and has most resources; the current French ministry of sustainable development is, instead, fairly large, resulting from the fusion of the former ministries of the environment and transport. Under the coordination of the respective ministries of the environment, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland created specific fora to foster consultations between the central government and local authorities¹³⁹ and count on dedicated teams for the follow up.¹⁴⁰ The perception of France and Germany as diplomatic heavyweights is not fully reflected here, where the institutionalization levels and available capacity add considerable weight in favor of Italy, Austria, and Switzerland.

With the exception of microstates Liechtenstein and Monaco, all parties are modern democracies. Also, with the exception of France and Slovenia, all parties are federal (Austria, Germany, Switzerland) or decentralized systems (Italy). While this adds a layer of complexity in the negotiations, especially if central governments need to consult with their local counterparts, in practice

¹³⁷ The two most significant journals for mountain research are *Revue de géographie alpine*, based in Grenoble, and *Mountain Research and Development*, based in Berne. On the history of Alpine research, see again Werner Bätzing (2001) and Thomas Scheurer and Jon Mathieu (2008). For other insightful contributions on mountain research, see Bernard Debarbieux (2001) and Axel Borsdorf together with Valérie Braun (2008).

¹³⁸ In the example of large carnivores (*i.e.* bear, wolf, and lynx), there is much controversy on how to balance the safety of the inhabitants and the conservation of the ecosystem; in the case of mitigation measures in the Alps, it is still unknown if the costs of such measures are consistent with the benefits produced, considering the negligible contribution of the Alpine region to global emissions and considering the uneven distribution of emissions across the Alps. Those examples are drawn from the recent decision to create a Large Carnivores Platform of the Alpine Convention (decision X/A6, 2009) and from the latest proposal to make the Alps a carbon neutral region by 2050.

¹³⁹ On Austrian institutions, see Marc Reiterer and Ewald Galle (2002) and the regular newsletter *Die Alpenkonvention*; on Italy, see Paolo Angelini *et al.* (2006) and the specific website www.convenzionedellealpi.it; on Switzerland, see Tim Enderlin and Maria Senn (2002).

¹⁴⁰ On the creation of the Italian “coordination unit”, hosted by the European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC), see the special insert to the journal *Academia* (Coluccia 2003), as well as its activity reports, available on EURAC’s website.

this happens rarely, even during the negotiation of key decisions.¹⁴¹ When observing the role of central governments in the convention, Keating's hypothesis that functional pressures on them lead to more issues being delegated to authorities other than the national government does not seem to hold. Despite immense workloads due to the many groups, platforms, conferences, meetings, projects, initiatives (with up to three events per week and agendas with up to fifteen items per day), the national delegations seem eager to affirm their ownership of the intergovernmental process, especially through the presidencies of the Alpine Convention and of the working groups and specific platforms.¹⁴² While the convention presidencies, which come with their agendas, rotate biannually, the chairmanship of the working groups and specific platforms is generally assigned to a certain country, which is usually expected to provide logistical support (organize the meetings, arrange the venues, etc.) and often specialized expertise (produce background studies, propose working documents, etc.). It usually is the country that launched the initiative in the first place. The secretariat plays an important role in facilitating and sometimes mediating the negotiations, but with ten units of personnel and a yearly budget of €875,000 there is only so much it can do. And it cannot do much more than supporting the parties.¹⁴³ To give another idea, in 2008, by itself, the largest NGO in the Alps, CIPRA, which is based in Liechtenstein, had incomes for more than €1.5 million.¹⁴⁴ Against Keating, it seems that the institutional capacity of the parties is so that few issues are delegated to authorities other than the national governments.

Said that, it is not easy to think of balance of power in traditional terms. Within the EU, for example, France, Germany, and for to a certain extent Italy, weight more—economically, culturally, even militarily—than Austria and Slovenia, plus Switzerland and the microstates (that are not EU members). There are certainly alliances based on certain affinities among countries, but they come and go. For instance, between 2004 and 2006, after the German and under the Austrian presidency, at the meetings of the Alpine Conference and of the permanent committee,¹⁴⁵ there seemed to be a rift between German speaking countries plus France, on the one hand, and Italy plus Slovenia, on the other, with Austria and Switzerland balancing between one side and the other,¹⁴⁶ and the secretariat being staffed mainly with German speaking members.¹⁴⁷ Between 2007 and 2009, under the French presidency, instead, the rift seemed to have shifted, with Italy, Austria, and France often sharing the same positions *vis-à-vis* Germany, Liechtenstein, plus sometimes Slovenia and Switzerland. However, these shifts were more the effects over time of divergences over specific issues, such as the emphasis on environmental protection *versus* sustainable development or the role of NGOs in the convention, which may follow the divide between Latin and Northern Europe,¹⁴⁸ and sometimes

¹⁴¹ On the two level game between the central government and local authorities, see the classical piece by Robert Putnam (1988), as well as the specific contribution by Stefan Brem and Stefano Bruno (1997).

¹⁴² For a critical outlook on the role of presidencies and leadership in the European Union, see, *inter alia*, Jonas Tallberg (2006).

¹⁴³ See decisions X/A2 and X/A5 with annexes (2009). To have an idea of the total funding available for activities under the Alpine Convention, one should also count national and local sources, such as the French contribution for five units of personnel working on protected areas of €410,000 per year or the Italian contribution for the Bolzano headquarters of the secretariat and two units of personnel. On the secretariat, see Irini Papanicolopulu (2004).

¹⁴⁴ The source is CIPRA's annual report for 2008, which is available online.

¹⁴⁵ The Alpine Conferences meets biannually at the ministerial political level, while the permanent committee is the regular semestral general meeting of the ministerial administrative level, comparable to the COREPER (Committee of Permanent Representatives) in the European Union.

¹⁴⁶ For a critical perspective on Austria and Switzerland as Alpine countries, see Bätzing (2008).

¹⁴⁷ This transpires, for example, from the words of Thomas Scheurer (2008) or the former deputy secretary general, Ruggero Schleicher Tappeser (2006).

¹⁴⁸ For reflections on the linguistic dimension of this rift, see the contribution by Paolo Angelini and the author (2008).

may also reflect personal affinities. These effects depend much less on the hegemonic role of one country or another. Italy, Austria, and, to a lesser degree, France are the larger contributors to the regular budget of the Alpine Convention.¹⁴⁹ The former two countries are also hosting the permanent secretariat in the twin cities of Innsbruck and Bolzano. They would be more predisposed to take hegemonic positions, also because of their institutional strength, but they rarely do so.

Conversely, also parties that have a minor stake in the convention, such as Germany, or microstates, such as Liechtenstein, often take the lead over several issues. CIPRA, the major Alpine NGO, for example, receives an important part of its core funding from Liechtenstein and Switzerland¹⁵⁰ and, being based in Vaduz, it could be considered an important tool for the foreign policy of this microstate. Considering the role of CIPRA in the launching and development of this ecoregional initiative, the Alpine Convention could be regarded among the greatest successes of the foreign policy of Liechtenstein.¹⁵¹ The fact is that the appropriation of the convention by the national governments, especially through the exercise of the various presidencies, allows each party to take the lead on specific issues they are interested in (such as transport for France, biodiversity for Germany, culture for Italy, etc.), and act as hegemon in their regard. Because of this configuration, the phenomenon of free riding is limited to some positions of Slovenia and Monaco, which rarely contribute to the convention's activities, because of lack of interest or institutional capacity.¹⁵² At the same time, it could be considered, paradoxically, extremely widespread. In fact, when a party takes the lead on an issue and creates, for example, a working group, if the other parties passively participate in the meetings, contributing to a minimal degree to the works, what is this other than free riding? While it could be interpreted as a simple division of labor, it is, arguably, a mixture of both, because, if most parties do not have the institutional capacity to fully contribute to each and every activity under the convention (so, they free ride the specific commitment of other parties) and they do not have the same level of interest in each topic. They prefer not impeding other parties from pursuing their objectives, so that other parties do not interfere with their own interests. Or, put it differently, the parties usually help each other pursuing their respective objectives. Is not this what international cooperation is all about? Still, this cooperative attitude is not a blank check. The parties remain vigilant that their main interests are not being threatened, especially before the conference of the parties. There, decisions are taken unanimously and, whereas isolated positions are diplomatically tough to uphold, a single party can block the adoption of any decision.¹⁵³ In an institutional framework, where all parties are equally sovereign and where Slovenia can veto France, hegemonic attitudes cannot take very far.

The Alpine Convention as a regional integration process has not taken the progressive functional approach that was taken, for instance, by the European Union. As Jörg Balsiger rightly highlights, even if it "looks and smells" like a regional environmental agreement like the Barcelona or Helsinki conventions, the parties have not embraced a sectorial approach, such as pollution control or biodiversity conservation, but a "comprehensive policy" that integrates several issue areas: population and culture, regional planning, prevention of air pollution, soil conservation, water management, conservation of nature and the countryside, mountain farming, mountain forests, tourism

¹⁴⁹ With 26.5%, 24.5%, and 18%, respectively. These proportions were calculated taking into consideration the surface, population, and GDP of the Alpine region in each state. See also p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ The source is CIPRA's annual report for 2008, which is available online.

¹⁵¹ On the implementation of the Alpine Convention in Liechtenstein, see, in particular, Thomas Bruha (2002).

¹⁵² On the implementation of the Alpine Convention in Slovenia, see Vesna Kolar-Planinsic (1998) and Senko Plicancic (2002).

¹⁵³ Even if article 7(1) of the framework convention sets a three-quarter majority rule for certain decisions (internal rules, scientific research, and technical cooperation), all decisions were taken by consensus at least since 2000.

and recreation, transport, energy, and waste management.¹⁵⁴ They opted for an extremely ambitious framework that was quite the opposite of the little by little, step by step approach of the European Union and that achieved producing an average of one implementing protocol a year in less than a decade, totaling a record of nine protocols, and rendering the Alpine Convention the most prolific regional environmental agreement in the world. The protocol elaboration period, which lasted the whole decade of the 1990s, absorbed all the energies of the convention and its parties to the point that the institution building phase was postponed to the 2000s. This resulted in a significant burden for the convention, especially for the rotating presidency that, until 2002, also acted as secretariat. The protocols were a remarkable weight for the parties, particularly for the ratification processes that are necessary for their entry into force. More than a decade later, Italy, Switzerland, and the EU are still struggling with their ratification.¹⁵⁵

This does not mean that these states are not already implementing these provisions. This emerged from an exercise to verify the status of implementation of the convention and its protocols launched in 2002. Within this “verification group”—composed of the delegations of the Alpine states, but remarkably observer-friendly (even if the current secretary general, Marco Onida, considers it “not really independent”)¹⁵⁶—Italy and Switzerland embraced an “implementation without ratification” approach, demonstrating that, through measures taken nationally or locally, both states were *de facto* complying with the letter of the protocols to the convention.¹⁵⁷ The Alpine Convention, instead of moving from little steps towards greater levels of regional integration, by the early 2000s, found itself trapped in this burdensome avenue, growing more inward than moving outward. But it is precisely in this period that, somehow surprisingly, the convention produced a first significant spillover effect, somehow related to the ecoregional ideal.

A European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was launched in 1975 to support, on the one hand, very small enterprises and related infrastructure projects and, on the other hand, mountain regions (also within the Common Agricultural Policy or CAP).¹⁵⁸ The main objective of this pilot action was to provide support to disadvantaged areas and entities, which were perceived as particularly vulnerable to the increased competition generated by European integration. Over the years, the EU regional policy shifted from being only about economic redistribution to being increasingly focused on so-called interregional cooperation, that is funding projects that bring together partners from different states (often divided by rivers, mountains, etc.).¹⁵⁹ In 1990, the INTERREG initiative was launched under ERDF, further structuring collaboration in three strands—crossborder, “transnational” (*i.e.*, regions), and “interregional” (*i.e.*, among regions)—with the final objective of making national borders redundant in a progressively integrated Europe. Interestingly, already in the first two cycles (INTERREG I, 1990-1993; INTERREG II, 1994-1999), several regions corresponded to

¹⁵⁴ See Balsiger (2008). See, in particular, article 2 of the framework convention and, for its background, Danz (1990).

¹⁵⁵ On the ratification process in Switzerland, see Stefan Brem and Stefano Bruno (1997) and the parliament debate, available online; on the Italian process, see the contribution by the author in Céline Randier, Stefan Cuypers *et al.* (2009) and, for an update, Paolo Angelini (2009).

¹⁵⁶ See Onida (2008, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ See, on the verification group, Tim Enderlin (2002; 2002) and, in particular, the reports to the Compliance Committee produced by Italy and Switzerland in 2005. See also Angelini *et al.* (2006).

¹⁵⁸ See regulation (EEC) 724/75 (1975).

¹⁵⁹ See, for instance, Talbot (1977), and the report *The European Community and its Regions: 10 years of community regional policy...* by the European Communities (1985).

ecoregions (e.g., Atlantic Area, Baltic Sea Region, etc.), but the Alpine region was not considered unitarily.¹⁶⁰

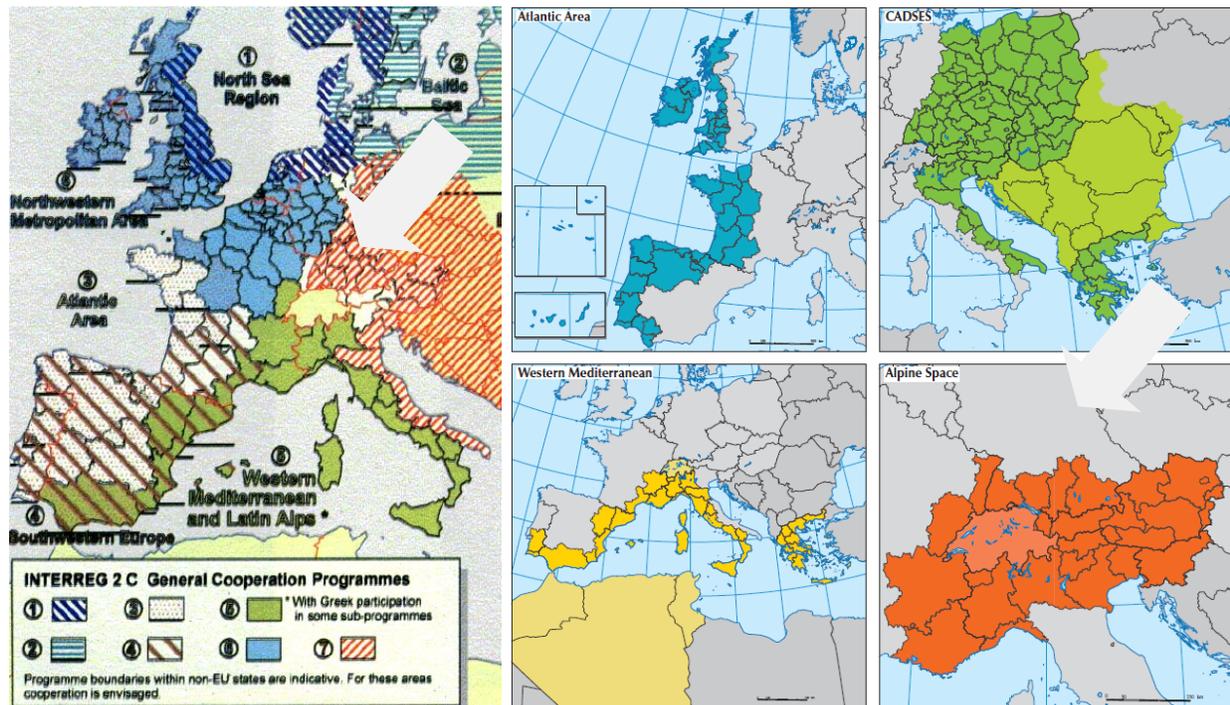


Figure 11: Regions identified in 1994 under INTERREG II (left), before the Alpine Space Programme was created, and after, in 2000, under INTERREG III (right).

Moreover, with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the European states included “strengthening economic and social cohesion” as an explicit objective of the EU, further deepening integration beyond national borders.¹⁶¹ It must be noted that, until 2007, INTERREG was a simple program of ERDF and that, at the time, territorial cohesion was not yet specifically included among the formal objectives of EU structural funding.¹⁶² Until recently, territorial cohesion remained on the side of the existing framework, but at the heart of the integration process. In fact, the budget dedicated to INTERREG went from €3.5 billion in 1994-1999 (INTERREG II) to €4.9 billion in 2000-2006 (INTERREG III). Only after significant advances in regional integration, European Territorial Cohesion (ETC) became an explicit objective of structural funding, which almost doubled to €7.8 billion for

¹⁶⁰ In the period 1997-1999, a pilot action was launched with a €10 million budget, involving two transnational working communities, ArgeAlp (Central Alps) and Alps Adriatic (Eastern Alps), created in the 1970s by subnational regions (LRDP 2003). On the important role of the Council of Europe and on the promotion of legal instruments for transboundary cooperation, such as the 1980 Madrid Convention, see Vedovato (1997); see, instead, Caveri (2002), on the 1994 European Charter on Mountain Regions. On transboundary cooperation in general, see also the article by Marie-Christine Fourny-Kober and Ruggero Crivelli (2003).

¹⁶¹ See articles 2, 3(j), especially, 129b, 129c, and 129d of 1992 Maastricht Treaty (non consolidated version).

¹⁶² EU structural funding is now composed of three funds: ERDF, the European Social Fund (to develop the European labor market), and the Cohesion Fund (to support less developed members).

the new program cycle 2007-2013 (which is still just 2.5% of overall structural funding available).¹⁶³

Returning to the Alps, it is now interesting to note that the EU decided to launch an Alpine Space Programme to fund projects at the Alpine scale in the framework of INTERREG (on the model, for example, of the Baltic Sea Region Programme). While the area of the Alpine Space is much larger than the scope of the Alpine Convention, the new program considerably boosted the transnational activities in the Alpine ecoregion.¹⁶⁴ To give an idea of the order of magnitude, in the period 2000-2006, the EU Alpine Space Programme provided €60 million (50% cofunding), a sum which more than doubled to €130 million for the period 2007-2013 (76% cofunding).¹⁶⁵ With the creation of the Alpine Space Programme, the Alpine countries, which are all also member states of the EU, with the exception of Switzerland and the microstates, succeeded in acting as a regional bloc at the European level, promoting Alpine interests, while the EU paradoxically reinforced transnational cooperation in the Alpine ecoregion at a time when the Alpine Convention was growing inward.¹⁶⁶ Even if there is no binding connection between the objectives of the Alpine Space Programme and the priorities under the Alpine Convention, there is much indirect coordination between the two processes.¹⁶⁷ While there is no “Alpine Convention Fund” to support large scale projects, the Alpine Space Programme *de facto* acts as such, especially since 2006, when Marco Onida, a former officer of the European Commission, was appointed Secretary General of the convention.¹⁶⁸ It is tempting to speak of the “Europeanization” of the Alpine Convention, but this would clearly be an overstatement: the convention remains an ecoregional initiative at the intergovernmental level (with the active participation of NGOs)¹⁶⁹ and the contacts with Brussels are rarely direct. What is arguably more significant is the indirect effect that the presence of the Alpine Convention had in the creation in 2000 of the Alpine Space Programme. In this case, the ecoregional ideal was adopted by specific actor as a basis for a policy intervention.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Compare regulations (EC) 1783/1999 and (EC) 1080/2006 on ERDF and refer to the European Commission's *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* (2008). See also the prospective study of INTERREG III (Bausch et al. 2005).

¹⁶⁴ For an introduction on the relationship between the EU and the Alpine Convention, see Sébastien Marciali (2008). The position of the EU was not defined out of the blue. For a reconstruction of the paradoxical situation that led to this EU initiative towards the Alpine area, see the paper presented by the author at the 2010 convention of the International Studies Association (pp. 41-48).

¹⁶⁵ The sources are the booklet *Bridging Potentials* (2008) and the new brochure *Portrait of the Alpine Space Programme* by the Joint Technical Secretariat of the program. See also the catalogue of projects under the 2000-2006 INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme (2006). Compare the figures reported at p. 57.

¹⁶⁶ However, this could be an exception, because there is little evidence of the Alpine states acting as a regional bloc elsewhere. In the future, another example might be the promotion of Alpine sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, but it still needs to be ascertained (*infra*).

¹⁶⁷ On the model of the 2009 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea, the proposed EU macro-regional strategy for the Alps could achieve a better coordination. At the same time, there is a possibility it would disjoin the EU and Alpine Convention processes, if the latter is not properly taken into account.

¹⁶⁸ Much effort was put, for example, to integrate the results of the projects under the Alpine Space Programme in the database of the Alpine Convention, which is now published online (SOIA). On the previous efforts, see the article by the former Deputy Secretary General, Ruggero Schleicher-Tappeser (2006).

¹⁶⁹ On this matter, see Götz (2004) and Church & Ramcilovic (2009).

¹⁷⁰ The ultimate test now for ecoregionalism in Europe is represented by the Carpathian Convention: will it manage to create a “Carpathian Convention Fund” for implementation projects or to catalyze other international organizations (e.g. the EU, UNEP, etc.) to create a “Carpathian Space Programme”? On this matter, see Brogiato & Church (2008).

Overcome by national pressures and institution building, by the mid 2000s, the way forward had become narrow, and that led the Alpine Convention to focus also on more specific, better defined issues, such as improving the knowledge on climate change in the Alps or the representation of Alpine sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This may represent a *rapprochement* with a progressive functional approach *à la* EU, which might lead, in turn, towards more spillover effects. This quest for specific issues that are better dealt with at the ecoregional level is a reflection of the ecoregional ideal in action, or of path dependency thereof. While the relative difficulty of this exercise, demonstrated in two decades of Alpine Convention, seems to prove the critics of ecoregional approaches right, the persistence and continuous evolution of an ecoregional institution where national governments are actively involved, constantly negotiating and launching new initiatives, is a proof that the ecoregional principle succeeds in mobilizing the Alpine states around a number of issues and does so in a manner that is different from how these topics would be dealt with if framework institutions did not exist or at the European level. The Alpine Convention establishes patterns of cooperation at the ecoregional scale and, as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, their effects depend on the dispositions of the actors involved, particularly the national governments.

The “strange case” of the Andean Community

*La inmensa espina dorsal de los Andes ... hizo o abrevió hacer que todos los países que estaban zurcidos por esa inmensa aguja fuesen parte de un mismo tejido.*¹⁷¹

This presentation does not follow the order usually adopted by most students of the Andean Community: historical evolution, legal framework, institutional structure, sectorial analysis, current status, and future developments.¹⁷² Far from being exhaustive, this comparison presents the community as a counterexample to the Alpine Convention, aiming at a better understanding of the phenomenon of environmental regionalism and of the convention in particular. This outlook will follow approximately the same order as the study of the Alpine Convention above, moving from the different perspectives of ecology and geography, to those of political science and international relations.¹⁷³ However, this text will make several comparative observations, which will be summarized at the end. This is not a common association. The Alpine Convention is usually portrayed as “the first mountain agreement” and the possibly only “model for other mountain regions.”¹⁷⁴ In the literature, the Andean Community represents a true “giant in the room” and it can arguably provide for an “alternative model”, especially given that the community is a regional organization of the South and is located in a postconflict area. From this viewpoint, for instance, the Balkans, the Caucasus, or the Himalaya are more similar to the Andes than to the Alps.¹⁷⁵ However, despite its identification

¹⁷¹ “The immense spine of the Andes ... made or made possible that all countries that were darned by this immense needle became part of the same fabric.” Translated by the author and quoted from a lecture by Luis Alberto Sánchez published by the Junta of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC) in 1983. The author is extremely grateful to the Documentation Center of the Andean Community, particularly to Virginia Barboza, for her invaluable assistance and marvelous support.

¹⁷² See, for example, Quindimil (2006) or Meyer and Ahumada (2006); in French, see also the article by Carlos Quenan (2007).

¹⁷³ See *supra* (p. 46).

¹⁷⁴ On the Alpine Convention as a model of regional mountain agreement, see Martin Price (1999, 2000), Werner Bätzing (2003), as well as, more recently, Jörg Balsiger (2007, 2008).

¹⁷⁵ In recent years, the Andes experienced war between Peru and Ecuador (1995-1998) and *guerrilla* especially in Peru (Sendero Luminoso, 1980-1992) and Colombia (FARC: 1964-present). In the same period, the Balkans suffered the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars in Bosnia (1992-1995) and Kosovo (1998-1999); the Caucasus witnessed the wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan for the Nagorno-

with a mountain range, the community is usually—and strangely enough—not considered to be an environmental initiative. This also despite the fact that the Amazon Treaty—a fairly traditional environmental agreement—was launched as a reaction in the 1970s.¹⁷⁶ Interpreting it as an ecoregional process is therefore an uncommon perspective on this “strange case.”

Similarly to its Alpine counterpart, the ecosystem of reference for the Andean Community corresponds to the mountain range (in Spanish: *cordillera*) known as the Andes. Quite differently, instead, the Andes are the longest chain on the planet, crossing a whole continent, from the equator to the Southernmost cities in the world,¹⁷⁷ and they can also be quite wide at the level of the tropics. From an ecological standpoint, this leads to an immense variety, ranging from forests to deserts, from glaciers to shrubs.¹⁷⁸ The fact that they border with the Amazon forest, the Argentine plain (*pampa*), and the Pacific ocean contributes to further enhance their biological diversity.¹⁷⁹ No other shared ecological reference is there except the *cordillera* itself. But quoting, *mutatis mutandi*, a student of cooperation around the Amazon, the Andean Community is “surprisingly undriven by transboundary environmental problems”, such as pollution from mining, which also affects the lowlands.¹⁸⁰ Like many mountain ranges, the Andes represent a main geographic landmark, defining state borders. Most remarkably, “highest summits” and “dividing waters” separate Chile from Argentina.¹⁸¹ However, also because of the difficult terrain, the exact location of borders is often controversial and led to significant quarrels, not only between Argentina and Chile, but also Peru and Ecuador, and Bolivia and Chile.¹⁸² Nevertheless, unlike their Alpine counterparts, the armed forces of the various countries did not create specialized corps for mountain regions.

Also unlike the case of the Alps and the Carpathians, the question of the specific definition of the perimeter of the *cordillera* never came out of geography departments or, perhaps, regional development circles. The scope of the Andean Community, which also constitutes a free trade area, includes the whole territory of its member states, not only mountains. Moreover, the Andean Community never covered the whole chain: Argentina, which is sovereign upon the Eastern half of the Southern range, never joined, while Chile left in 1976 and Venezuela in 2006.¹⁸³ An atlas, recently

Karabakh (1988-1994) and, recently, between Russia and Georgia for Southern Ossetia (2008), plus the crisis in Chechnya (1994-1996, 1999-2000); while the Himalaya experiences several crises, from war in Afghanistan, to civil war in Nepal, from conflict over Kashmir (India-Pakistan) to uprisings in Tibet (China). The Alps have been outside of the theater of war since the end of World War II.

¹⁷⁶ See, for instance, Elizabeth Ferris (1981) and *infra*.

¹⁷⁷ Namely, Ushuaia in Argentina and Punta Arenas in Chile.

¹⁷⁸ See, the detailed atlas of the Tropical Andes recently published by the Secretariat of the Andean Community (2009), as well as the environmental outlook produced in 2003 together with UNEP/Comunidad Andina. Secretaría General and UNEP, “Geo Andino 2003: Perspectivas Del Medio Ambiente,” (Lima-México: CAN - PNUMA, 2003).; see also José Salaverry on Peruvian ecology (2006). This also depends on the “chosen reign”: the atlas distinguishes, for instance, between ecoregions and “phytoregions.”

¹⁷⁹ In 2000, Conservation International, an NGO, identified Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela as “megadiverse” countries (Williams et al. 2001; 2000). An international organization of Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMC) was created in 2002 and its secretariat is hosted by India. Peru uses the slogan “*país megadiverso*” for national tourist promotion.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted from Kathryn Hochstetler about contending regionalisms in South America (2010). The Amazon Treaty is an ecoregional agreement launched in 1978 and transformed into an organization in 1995.

¹⁸¹ See article 1 of the 1881 Boundary Treaty between Argentina and Chile. See also footnote 16.

¹⁸² On border disputes in the Andean region, see, for instance, the contributions of the author on Argentina and Chile (2005, 2008), as well as those on the 1966 Palena award (Barros 1984; Rushworth and Smith 1968); on Peru and Ecuador and Bolivia and Chile, see the extensive literature on the subject matter.

¹⁸³ Historically, the community was created also to counter the hegemony of Brasilia and Buenos Aires, as well as an alternative and complementary experience to the then Latin American Free Trade Association

published by the Andean Community, proposed a definition for the Northern and Central Andes (the so-called “Tropical Andes”), but this proposal is limited to the scope of the study. The extreme diversity of the *cordillera* renders the adoption of the methods developed in Europe, as well as of any uniform method, fairly difficult. Consequently, the authors of the atlas considered a wide selection of available literature, including national maps, and combined it on an *ad hoc* basis.¹⁸⁴

The Andean Initiative of the Mountain Partnership

The Andean Community should not be confused with the “Andean Initiative” of the Mountain Partnership. Based on the experience of the Alpine Convention, the “Andean Initiative” aims at adapting the Alpine model to the Andean ecoregion (both Tropical and Southern Andes). This initiative was preceded by an intergovernmental consultation on sustainable development of mountain regions in Latin America, held in 1995 in Lima and organized by FAO to advance the implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21. The initiative builds on a series of meetings at the global level on mountain ecosystems, held in Cuzco and Huaraz, Peru, before and during the International Year of Mountains (IYM), before the Mountain Partnership was created. The Second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership, held in 2004 in Cuzco, was the occasion for a first meeting of Andean partners in a “breakaway session.” Some priorities were set and certain initiatives proposed. Certain countries decided to create national “mountain committees”, on the model of the national committees created at the time of the IYM. The national focal points for the Mountain Partnership—civil servants in ministries of the environment or in environmental directorates of foreign ministries—played a key role in this regard. However, the preparation meeting for the first meeting under the Andean Initiative took place only in 2006—always in Lima—and a series of thematic axes were agreed upon. At that time, the Argentine mountain committee (*Comité de Montaña*), which is hosted by the Argentine Ministry for the Environment and which was the most developed institutionally, took the lead in the preparation of the meeting. In 2007, representatives of the national administrations of all Andean states, with the exception of Chile, met in Tucumán, Argentina. The Secretary General of the Alpine Convention was also present at this meeting. An Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of Andean Mountains was adopted, spelling out strategic objectives, specific projects, and potential partners (following the model of the Andean Environmental Agenda of the Andean Community). Five priority axes were identified: sustainable use of resources, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, institutional capacity building, climate change, and transversal issues (education, training, gender, age groups, networking, and local participation). However, the Andean Initiative faces the major challenge of positioning itself among the Andean Community, the Andean states (especially through the mountain committees), CONDESAN, and many other local, regional, and global initiatives on mountain regions, as well as dealing with the sheer extension of the whole *cordillera*. Some mountain committees are dynamic and are implementing projects (Argentina and Ecuador), some are currently being organized (Chile and Bolivia), while some situations are unclear (Peru and Colombia). Only the Venezuelan committee is not in place yet.

(ALALC), now Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) (*infra*). Chile left after the coup of 1973. At the same time, Venezuela also left the 1995 G3 Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Colombia.

¹⁸⁴ See, in particular, Josse *et al.* (2009), as well as the methodological sections on the schemes by Van der Hammen and Santos, on the one hand, and by Navarro and Maldonado, on the other. For a critical perspective by an Alpine geographer on the definition of the Andean region, read Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (2007).



Figure 12: Map of Andean ecosystems.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Produced by Josse *et al.* and published by the Secretariat of the Andean Community (2009). While this is not an official map by the Andean Community, Colombia produced an official map of its ecosystems. Many thanks to Maria Teresa Becerra for her kind availability.

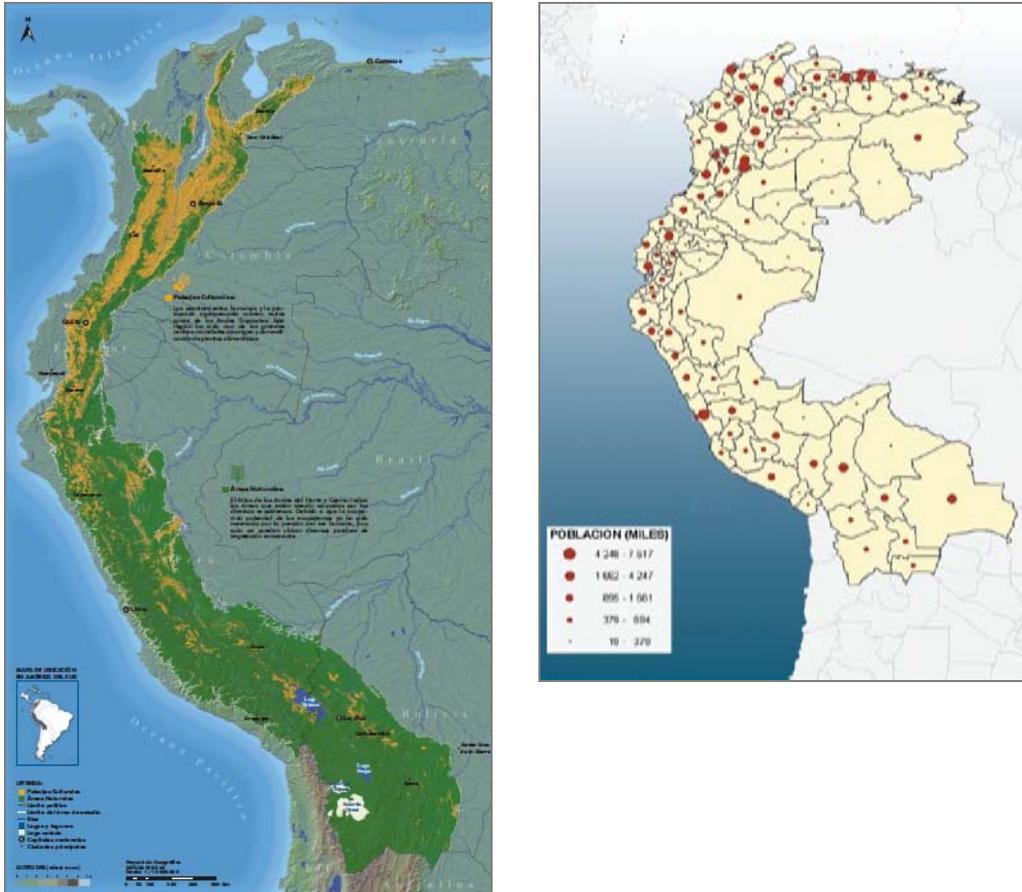


Figure 13: Maps of Andean cultural landscapes (left) and population distribution (right).¹⁸⁶

This is also the reflection of a structural difference between the mode of settlement and, generally, the demographics of the Alps *vis-à-vis* the Andes. Throughout the continent, major cities are historically located along or near the coast to facilitate trade with Europe and Asia. After the conquest (*conquista*), urban centers were mainly populated by European settlers, concentrating economic power in these locations, such as Lima or Bogotá, while indigenous people were relegated to the fields (*campo*), the mines (*minas*), the forest (*selva*), or the mountains (*sierra*).¹⁸⁷ Nowadays, mountain regions are scarcely inhabited, especially toward the South, and the vast majority of the population is found in the cities and toward the coast. This phenomenon was accentuated by the massive exodus from rural areas that took place during the second half of the 20th century throughout much of the South of the world, which resulted in the rapid emergence of “megalopolises.”¹⁸⁸ These developments had important consequences for mountain regions, which found themselves in many cases strained because of, on the one hand, depopulation and, on the other, growing needs for natural resources such as water, minerals, forest goods, and agricultural products by urban centers

¹⁸⁶ Reproduced from the abovementioned atlas (2009) and outlook (2003). Technically, the map on the left represents information on natural and other areas, including seminatural areas inhabited by indigenous populations.

¹⁸⁷ For a urban perspective on indigenous people, see the classical Efraín Kristal (1987); see also the anthropological perspective of Beatriz Nates (2004).

¹⁸⁸ See, for instance, Andean Community (2003), and the three issues of the *Cahiers des Amériques Latines* recently published on these issues (Changements démographiques en Amérique latine 2004; Métropoles d'Amérique latine 2000; Centres-villes, centralité, décentralisation en Amérique latine 1994).

and a globalizing economy.¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, this is not a new phenomenon and one can hardly find a solution of continuity since the time of the *conquista*. More fortunately, indigenous people still living these mountain areas continue to perform important roles for the sustainable management of Andean ecosystems.

Unlike the Alps, therefore, the Andes have not traditionally been crossed by economically important trade routes or transport corridors.¹⁹⁰ This is also signaled by low levels of anthropization. The Panamerican highway, for instance, follows the line of the coast all the way from Mexico to Chile, never crossing the Andes, with the only exception of the trait between Santiago and Buenos Aires.¹⁹¹ However, recent years have seen a slight reversal of this trend. At the continental level, in 2000, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), a massive investment program especially in the transport sector, was launched with the aim of improving the access to the interior of the continent and of promoting, at the same time, intraregional trade. Eight out of ten priority axes identified by the initiative cross the *cordillera* latitudinally or longitudinally.¹⁹² At the local level, many are the examples of this tendency being inverted. Decades of quarrels over the border line in the Cenepa district, had left these peripheral and mountainous regions of Peru and Ecuador in utter misery, which further increased with the armed conflict. Together with the 1998 peace agreements, a Framework Agreement on Border Integration, Development and Neighborhood was signed in Brasilia, setting in motion a process aiming at settling this “historic debt.” The agreement resulted in a binational plan for the development of the border region, which entered into force for a period of ten years, was later renewed for five additional years, and included a binational fund. Among the projects supported by the fund, five transboundary transport axes result at present under construction, four of which run across mountain regions.¹⁹³ Also unlike the Alps, the tourist sector is relatively little developed, except for global landmarks such as the ruins of Machu Picchu or the glaciers of Patagonia, particularly regarding winter sports. The coordination of tourist business and policies is therefore a marginal issue. This is testified by the lack of initiatives at the regional level, except for the “Andean visa”, which is issued upon entrance in any member state of the Andean Community and grants freedom of movement within the community.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ See, among others, Kathryn Hochstetler (2010).

¹⁹⁰ Although, historically, several ancestral paths (*caminos ancestrales*) have a significant import at the Andean level, such as the Great Inca road (*Gran ruta inca*) and its network of more than 35,000 miles of paths (Astuhumán González 2008). Many thanks to Jorge Recharte for his invaluable help.

¹⁹¹ The highway was conceived at the V Panamerican Conference, held in 1923 in Santiago. On the early conferences, see Claudio Marichal (2002).

¹⁹² See Figure 15 (*infra*). By December 2009, IIRSA counted on a portfolio of 510 infrastructure projects in the fields of transport, energy and communications, corresponding to an estimated investment of \$74.5 billion. IIRSA is backed, in particular, by three banks: the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), and the Fondo Financiero para el Desarrollo de la Cuenca del Plata (FONPLATA). See, in particular, Marcelo Mesquita Moreira (2008); see also Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (2003) and, for a comparative perspective between Southern Andes and Western Alps, Gian Paolo Torricelli (2003).

¹⁹³ By February 2009, the Binational Fund approved its support for 379 projects for a total of \$18.7 million. This might not seem much if compared with the estimated cost of the agreement, which was of \$3 billion in 1998. This included the proceedings from international cooperation, for example, the contributions of €40 and €106 million by the EU to the first and fifth axis, respectively, while Japan pledged ¥574 million for the construction of a bridge. Still, total funding is less than initially planned. See the publication by the Peruvian branch of the secretariat of the Binational Plan (2009).

¹⁹⁴ See Decision 503 (2001).

In the Andean region, alongside agriculture, a key sector from both a social and environmental perspective is arguably mining.¹⁹⁵ All Andean countries are leading exporters of minerals to the rest of the world. In recent years, their national economies greatly benefitted from the high prices of gold, oil, copper, natural gas, and other minerals. Central governments often employed revenues from mining to strengthen their positions both domestically, especially investing in infrastructure, and internationally. The “petrodiploamacy” of Venezuela, a founding member of OPEC, is probably the best known example; the budget surplus of Chile, which brought public debt from more than 40% of GDP in 1989 to zero in less than twenty years, is another significant example, linked with the exceptionally high price of copper. While mining is an economic activity generally oriented toward export markets, it usually bears significant domestic consequences, both socially and environmentally. Mines are often in remote areas, which diminishes the capacity of the government to enforce the rule of law, and often expose workers (both those working by themselves and those depending on corporations) and inhabitants to inhumane conditions; mines are also often located in mountain areas, which results, for example, in the contamination of rivers and of the general environment (with frequent repercussions in the lowlands), on top of the abovementioned problems with law enforcement (also of environmental standards).¹⁹⁶

The Yasuní Project

In the oil sector, the Ecuadorian government has demonstrated unparalleled creativity. The most remarkable example is the recent proposal not to exploit the oil reserves buried under the Yasuní region in the Amazon, one of the areas with the highest biodiversity in the world and home to the Huaorani people and other indigenous tribes. Despite the fact that they are the largest known oil reserves in the country (estimated at 900 million barrels), the Ecuadorian government has proposed not to issue concessions to oil companies, but to lease, instead, the area to conservation groups (for the symbolic “price” of \$350 million a year).

This caught the attention also of the international community and led to a growing concern for river basins. In the 1980s, for example, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) launched an initiative on the management and development of freshwater basins in high mountains, which looked critically at mining and which had a significant impact on how international cooperation saw these issues and designed projects.¹⁹⁷ This perspective was somehow unfortunate, because looking at mountains from the perspective of flowing rivers was only part dealing with the concerns of mountain inhabitants, part with those of lowlands (water supply and pollution). Also, it must be noted that, while several rivers originate from the Andes, they are

¹⁹⁵ See, among others, the critical perspective of Keith Slack on mining governance in Latin America (2009), as well as the monograph on the sustainability of the mining company Cerro Matoso by Laura Milanés *et al.* (2006).

¹⁹⁶ The problem of the pollution of waters because of the use of mercury for gold extraction is particularly acute. See the portrayal of Peruvian gold rush frontier, La Rinconada, in *National Geographic* (Larmer 2009).

¹⁹⁷ See the publication *Gestión para el desarrollo de cuencas de alta montaña en la zona andina* (1988). This process was also funded by the Italian Government and supported by UNEP together with the then Andean Pact. See also the background paper on upland watersheds prepared by Jayanta Bandyopadhyay for the Brundtland Commission (1985). The Andean study represented an important reference for the development of projects, for example by CONDESAN (watershed initiative). On CONDESAN, see the presentation by Miguel Saravia and Marcela Quintero (2009). In Bolivia, a controversial project is the Misicuni dam, also supported by the Italian Cooperation. By 2013, the dam is supposed to supply water to the city of Cochabamba, stage of the “water revolt” of 2000. The revolts were a consequence of the higher prices deriving from the privatization of the water sector imposed by the IMF (Schultz 2008; Poupeau 2002; Kruse 2005).

rarely transboundary, with the important exception of the Amazon River (which flows towards the Atlantic) and of few smaller ones of pure bilateral interest (such as the Pastaza River between Peru and Ecuador). Always dealing with freshwater, but with a different focus (wetlands), another significant initiative was launched in the 2000s and focused on the *páramo* areas, a fragile ecosystem at high altitude being inhabited by several groups, nearly always of indigenous heritage, providing carbon storage and water supply. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (UN-EP/GEF) and, under the leadership of CONDESAN, an important regional NGO, is executed by a consortium of mainly regional academic institutions.¹⁹⁸ The member states of the Andean Community have also shown particular interest in this project, also through its secretariat (SGCAN), despite the significant differences in protection levels, ranging from the total prohibition of mining in the *páramo* areas decreed by Colombia to relative lack of protection in Peru.¹⁹⁹

Returning to the surprising environmental “undriveness” of the Andean Community, it must be noted that, similarly to the Amazon Treaty, since the end of the 1990s, the place of the environment has risen significantly in the agenda of the Andean states. For Chile, Peru, and Colombia, there is a general agreement that the negotiation of free trade agreements (FTAs) was instrumental in this regard, due to pressure from the US Senate.²⁰⁰ This is certainly not the case for Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, which strongly opposed the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and, unlike Lima and Bogotá, did not engage in bilateral negotiations with the US.²⁰¹ The cooperation with and the negotiation of a free trade agreement with the EU at the level of the Andean Community as a trading block were also instrumental for its member states. Concerns of “environmental dumping” were also present on the negotiating table.²⁰² The levels of environmental protection are still not the same in all countries, with Colombia generally portrayed as upholding higher standards, while Peru is usually perceived lagging behind.²⁰³ However, policy convergence is noticeable at the regional level and general increase of environmental awareness can be appreciated among the member states.

External pressures are, in fact, matched by the internal expectations of increasingly wealthy and aware societies. Over the last two decades, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) grew sub-

¹⁹⁸ On CONDESAN, see *supra*.

¹⁹⁹ See the section on the *páramo* areas in the atlas published by the Andean Community (2009; Josse et al. 2009); see also the synthesis document produced by the politics component of the *páramo* project.

²⁰⁰ Chile signed its FTA with the US in 2003, Peru and Colombia in 2006 (Schott 2006; Ruiz-Dana 2009). At the time of writing, the approval by the US Senate of the FTA with Colombia was still pending.

²⁰¹ On the FTAs, the FTAA and regional integration, see the book edited by Consuelo Ahumada and Arturo Cancino (2003), as well as the contribution by Ariela Ruiz Caro on the FTA with Peru (2007).

²⁰² On the negotiations of a FTA between the Andean Community and the EU, see the assessment by Marleny Bustamante and Rita Giacalone (2008; 2009). See also Giovanni Molano’s thesis (2010).

²⁰³ The leadership of Colombia and Peru’s relative laggardness emerged clearly from the interview material.

Such a clear picture seems to be confirmed only in part by the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), coproduced by the Earth Institute at Columbia University and the Center for Environmental Law & Policy at Yale. The changes in the ranking seem to be more related to method changes than to actual changes in the countries (Hák, Moldan, and Dahl 2007; Bell and Morse 2008).

	ESI 2005	EPI 2010
Colombia	58.9 (23)	76.8 (10)
Chile	53.6 (42)	73.3 (16)
Ecuador	52.4 (51)	69.3 (30)
Peru	60.4 (16)	69.3 (31)
Venezuela	48.1 (82)	62.9 (64)
Bolivia	59.5 (20)	44.3 (137)

stantially in all countries.²⁰⁴ Like everywhere, the number and activism of environmental NGOs also grew.²⁰⁵ As a result, also the Andean Community started focusing on environmental issues. In 1998, this led to the creation of an Andean Committee of Environmental Authorities (in Spanish: *Comité Andino de Autoridades Ambientales* or CAAAM).²⁰⁶ A Regional Biodiversity Strategy was subsequently developed in the framework of the CBD and was approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers (*Consejo Andino de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores* or CAMRE), at the highest decision-making level after the Presidential Council (*Consejo Presidencial Andino*), in 2002, something the Alpine Convention has not developed yet.²⁰⁷ Two years later, a Council of Environmental Ministers (*Consejo de Ministros de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible del la Comunidad Andina*) was also launched, raising the political level of environmental negotiations and signaling a capacity increase of Andean institutions, particularly of the respective Ministries of the Environment.²⁰⁸ However, the most significant decision was the adoption, in 2006, of a non-legally binding, but greatly advertised, Andean Environmental Agenda (*Agenda Ambiental Andina* or AAA) for 2006-2010, which was adopted by the Council of Environmental Ministers in 2006, and is currently being renegotiated. The new agenda could be approved with a formal decision at the level of the Council of Foreign Ministers, thus becoming legally binding and going from soft to hard law, depending on the contents and their formulation.²⁰⁹ Unlike the decisions of the Alpine Conference, the decisions of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in fact, may be legally binding for the member states, are preemptive to national legislation, and may also be directly applied by internal courts.²¹⁰ By shaping common policies and by adopting common decisions, Andean states reduce transaction costs internally (*vis-à-vis* national legislators) and externally (*vis-à-vis* future environmental disputes). Plus, they can count

²⁰⁴ Refer to the official data published by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD):

	1988	1998	2008	
Venezuela	\$ 3,105.63	\$ 3,889.59	\$ 11,375.60	These figures correspond to the most recent official data on per capita GDP at current prices (US dollars), reported by the member states to the UN.
Chile	\$ 2,095.55	\$ 5,277.81	\$ 10,091.25	
Colombia	\$ 1,635.42	\$ 2,876.96	\$ 5,415.09	
Peru	\$ 1,488.74	\$ 2,251.86	\$ 4,471.15	
Ecuador	\$ 1,074.54	\$ 1,942.16	\$ 3,899.62	
Bolivia	\$ 686.77	\$ 1,064.71	\$ 1,722.82	

²⁰⁵ On environmental NGOs, see the book by Thomas Princen et Matthias Finger (1994) and the chapter by Barbara Gemmill and Amimbola Bamidelu-Izu (2002). More specifically on Latin America, see Marie Price (1994), Blanca Torres (1997) and Catherine Christen (1998). For a recent ethnography of a Peruvian mountain NGO, see the doctoral thesis by Nicolas Mereveille (2010). Finally, on the growth in the number of NGOs worldwide, refer to the classic Willetts (1996).

²⁰⁶ Refer to Decision 435 (1996). These institutional developments were preceded by substantive decisions on environmental matters: Decision 182 (1983), launching the José Celestino Mutis Andean System on Agriculture, Food Security and Environmental Conservation; Decision 345 (1993), establishing a Common Regime for the Protection of the Rights of the Breeder of Plant Varieties; and Decision 391 (1996), creating a Common Regime on Access to Genetic Resources.

²⁰⁷ Adopted with Decision 593 Comunidad Andina, "Estrategia Regional De Biodiversidad Para Los Países Del Trópico Andino," (Lima: Comunidad Andina, Secretaría General, 2005).(2002). See also *supra*.

²⁰⁸ Refer to Decision 596 (2004). See also *infra*.

²⁰⁹ On the distinction between soft and hard law and for a discussion thereof, read Christine Chinkin (2000), Kenneth Abbott *et al.* (2000), as well as Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Antto Vihma (2009). I am extremely grateful to Sylvia for these references.

²¹⁰ Refer, *inter alia*, to Jorge Quindimil (2006) and to the landmark decision of the Andean Tribunal of Justice (*Tribunal de Justicia de la Comunidad Andina*) 2 IP 88 (1988) on a prejudicial interpretation of a decision of the Andean Commission requested by the Supreme Court of Colombia. This decision establishes "the absolute preemption of community law", citing extensively the community law of the EU as precedent, in particular the Costa/ENEL (1964) and the Simmenthal (1978) cases. Refer also to the abundant literature on legally binding international agreements and the preemption and direct effect of community law.

on the support of the institutional framework of the Andean Community, particularly its secretariat, located in Lima.²¹¹

Similarly to the Alpine Convention, the Andean Community is also a product of the capitals. It was launched the late 1960s by the governments, under the leadership of the presidents of Chile (Eduardo Frei) and Colombia (Carlos Lleras).²¹² Consultations were held with economic actors, in particular with the industrial, commercial, and agricultural sector.²¹³ In the 1960s, the initial opposition of Venezuelan industrialists was overcome as soon as the objective of further developing the industrial capacity of Andean countries became evident.²¹⁴ However, at the beginning of Andean integration, the involvement of civil society as it is now intended was minimal. Unlike the Alpine Convention, but like the EU, there is no NGO with a status of official observer.²¹⁵ If this was common practice in the 1960s, it is less so today. However, representatives from the scientific community, NGOs, other international organizations, and some other governments are from time to time invited to participate in the meetings, especially on environmental issues.²¹⁶ Like in the case of the EU, the Andean Parliament (*Parlamento Andino*), established in 1979 and based in Bogotá, is supposed to be the representative moment of the integration process. In 1996, the member states decided that its representatives were to be elected directly, however it remains a consultative body, with oversight prerogatives but no legislative power.²¹⁷ Actually, it is the states and the secretariat that are the main sources of policy proposals. External pressures from the US or the EU can also play an important role, for instance in the negotiation of bilateral agreements²¹⁸, and emulation of the institutions of the EU is remarkable: the Andean Presidential Council corresponds to the European Council; the Council of Foreign Ministers to the General Affairs Council of the EU; the Andean Commis-

²¹¹ See *ibid.* .

²¹² See the synthesis of the conference on the “construction” of the Andean Community, held in 1990 at the headquarters of the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF) in Caracas (Cabrera Ferrada 1991).

²¹³ See *ibid.* .

²¹⁴ Read the interview with Carlos Lleras (1992).

²¹⁵ The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has been granting “consultative status” to certain NGOs since its creation (article 71 of the UN Charter). It is worth noting that, since the 1990s, the Council of Europe also recognizes consultative status to international NGOs (Resolution (93) 38). Within the EU, a Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform) was launched in 1995 and is regularly consulted by the European Commission. However, no NGO has the status of official observer of the EU. Like in the case of the Andean Community, the European Parliament is the representative moment of the integration process. On environmental NGOs, return to footnotes 169 and 205 (*supra*).

²¹⁶ The scientific community, NGOs, other international organizations, and some other governments are essential, for instance, to the implementation of the AAA, which explicitly refers to potential alliances with those actors, naming them individually (2007).

²¹⁷ The Andean Parliament was first convened in 1984. Until 1996, its members were elected by the respective parliaments of the member states. With only twenty members, it is by all standards a small parliament (the members were twenty-five before the withdrawal of Venezuela). In 1996, the Trujillo Protocol was adopted. Consequently, direct suffrages have already been held in Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, while Bolivian representatives are still elected indirectly (despite a provision of its constitution already foresees direct suffrage). Again, similarly to the case of the EU, over the years, despite those advances, the Parliament was object of some criticism for its lack of political clout. The outcome of the recent elections for the Colombian representatives, which were held for the first time on March 14, 2010, and which resulted in a majority of blank votes, is symptomatic of those criticisms. This is comparable to the turnout for the 2009 elections of the European Parliament, which was below 25% in Poland.

²¹⁸ See *supra* (p. 77).

sion to the Economic and Financial Affairs Council; the General Secretariat to the European Commission; the Andean Tribunal of Justice to the European Court of Justice, etc.²¹⁹

Norm circulation, especially between the Andean Community and the European Union, is certainly facilitated by regular exchanges, particularly with the European Commission.²²⁰ In this regard, the impact of the EU as an example for the Andean Community cannot be underestimated, also considering that the EU experience is, usually, the textbook case of regional integration also in Andean countries and that it is still relatively common for the political elites of Latin America to have studied in EU universities and resided in EU capitals. Particular movements, such as the Aymara group below, and certain individuals, such as in the *páramo* case, can also play a significant role. The development and implementation of the *páramo* project, in fact, owes a lot to the dedication of individuals, such as Jorge Recharte and Miguel Saravia, and the concrete support of their respective organizations, the Mountain Institute and CONDESAN, whose role is comparable to that of IUCN and CIPRA in the Alpine Convention.²²¹ However, mobilization does not take place in the void.

Dating back to the 19th century, Panamericanism is a unifying factor in the Andes, similar to Europeanism in the Alps: the Andean Community, in fact, was developed in the framework of the Latin American integration process, as a building block towards deeper integration.²²² However, unlike in the Alpine case, a unifying rather than a dividing factor, not only among Andean countries, is the Spanish language. Despite the great variety of Andean indigenous languages, such as Quechua or Aymara and their dialects, Spanish is official language in each Andean country.²²³ This greatly facilitates international negotiations, which do not need costly translation or interpreting services. For the concrete implementation of certain projects, the usage of Andean languages is sometimes needed in remote areas, which is not necessarily a disaggregating factor. Also in the Andes, locals identify themselves and are identified with their mountains. However, reserves similar to those

²¹⁹ On norm circulation, see Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), Michael Barnett and, again, Martha Finnemore (2004), and Susan Park (2006), while on international mimesis, particularly between the Andean Community and the EU, read the insightful article by Jorge Quindmil (2002).

²²⁰ Several capacity building projects, funded by the EU, are currently being implemented on the following topics: drugs, institutions, statistics, trade, civil society, risk prevention, and social, economic and territorial cohesion (Molano 2010). In 1979, a first cooperation agreement was signed and focused on agriculture, health, and education; in 1984, a second generation agreement targeted economic and trade affairs; in 1993, a third generation agreement included social and political development. In 2002, the negotiations for an association agreement were commenced. The same year, a first regional strategy for the Andean Community was launched by the EU for the period 2000-2006. A second strategy was recently inaugurated for 2007-2013, focusing on economic integration, drugs, and social and economic cohesion. These regional strategies are essentially funding programs for international cooperation. At the time of writing, the negotiations for an association agreement were still pending.

²²¹ The Mountain Institute is the first NGO on mountain conservation active globally. Established in 1972 in West Virginia, it is now present mainly in the Appalachians, Andes, and Himalaya. Its fieldwork and leadership are remarkable. In 1995, the Mountain Institute played a fundamental role in the establishment of the Mountain Forum, the global network of mountain NGOs that used to be hosted by ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) in Kathmandu and that is now hosted by CONDESAN in Lima. On CONDESAN and the *páramo* project, see p. 77.

²²² Refer to footnote 183.

²²³ In Bolivia, Aymara and Quechua are also official languages; in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, Spanish is the only official language (in Chile, Andean languages are “co-official” in the indigenous communities; in Peru, they are also “co-official” where spoken by the majority of the population; in Ecuador, they are of “official use” by indigenous people; finally, in Venezuela, they are “official” only for the people speaking them). On Andean languages, see the reference books by Alfredo Torero (2005) and Willem Adelaar and Pieter Muysken (2004), as well as the article by Paul Heggarty in the *Revista Andina* on the use of innovative techniques for the study of Andean languages (2007).

made in the case of the Alps also apply: identification is often partial and overlaps with other identifying factors, such as the continent, the nation, religion, ethnicity, social class, family origins, etc.²²⁴ The Andes have different meanings to different people. Take the urban practice of “andinism” and the recent phenomenon of “Andean presidents.” Synonymous of “alpinism”, the first term corresponds to the practice of mountaineering, which is typical of urban and global elites using mountains as recreation grounds or science laboratories.²²⁵ Take then the case of indigenous presidents discussed below. The Andes are definitely polysemous, thus allowing different people to identify themselves with them in different manners. However, the Andean Community has not led to the proliferation of mountain initiatives we observed for the Alpine Convention: CONDESAN, an umbrella NGO, was created in 1993, and the Mountain Institute is present in Peru since 1996. Still, local actors and initiatives are numerous and are often supported by international cooperation. Local governments and organizations have less resources than their European counterparts, but their impact factor is not negligible. Just for the *páramo* project, CONDESAN counted not less than 216 institutions that, throughout the region, have capacity in that regard. Most of these institutions are local governments, organizations, and universities. Moreover, the ongoing decentralization process, despite the significant national differences that we are going to explore, is further empowering local institutions. Currently, the Andean Community and, particularly, CONDESAN are playing the fundamental role the Alpine Convention and CIPRA played to network and mobilize these resources.

Another key issue in mountain regions is the indigenous question, which can vary significantly depending on the state, group, and individual. It goes well beyond the scope of this study, but it is worth mentioning, given also that two of the presidents of the region are of indigenous background (*i.e.*, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia). Throughout the continent, as it often happens when a population is threatened, when the *conquistadores* occupied the land, the Amerindians found shelter in remote areas, especially mountain regions, sometimes attempting resistance.²²⁶ During the colonial period, indigenous people were considered barely humans, often enslaved, which left the new republics in the early 19th century with the challenge to integrate them as full citizens. Some students of this period refer to this as a process of “internal colonization.” Towards the end of the 19th century, the romantic *indigenista* literary movement became increasingly popular among the urban elites throughout the continent and was transformed, in the 20th century, into the *mestizo* ideology, namely the belief that the mixing of European and Amerindian “races” would contribute to the progress of the nation, genetically “reinforcing” indigenous populations. Basically all Latin American countries followed this historical trajectory with only minor differences until the early 1980s, when this approach underwent strong criticism. Indigenous people were, in fact, portrayed as the objects of these policies, and not as the subjects thereof. This coincided with the emergence of several indigenous movements and initiatives empowering the participation of indigenous people in the shaping of their communities, with particular emphasis on their ethnical diversity and right to selfdetermination.²²⁷ The reception and impact of these movements varied

²²⁴ See also footnote 53.

²²⁵ Mountaineering is definitely less common in Latin America than in Europe, especially because those who can afford it are few, and infrastructures are lacking. For a more critical perspective, see the article by Thomas Lefebvre on the Western invention of Andean peaks (2005).

²²⁶ Although the system of reductions (*reducciones*) proved fairly successful in keeping the Amerindians where they were, think of the Tupac Amaru episode (both the last Inca leader and the 16th century and the indigenous rebel of the 18th century). This is a common phenomenon: think also, for example, of the role of the Sierra Maestra for the *guerrilleros* during the Cuban Revolution or of the Alps and the Appennines for the *partigiani* during the Antifascist Resistance. On ethnicity, markets, and migration in the Andes, see Larson and Harris (1995).

²²⁷ See, *inter alia*, Ramón Maíz (2004, 2004). In 2007, this process led to the landmark adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (document A/RES/61/295).

significantly depending on the country, with Ecuador and Bolivia, for instance, fully embracing their multiethnicity.²²⁸ An interesting example in the Andes is the Aymara ethnic group, which spreads in mountain areas from Bolivia to Peru and Chile and which, also thanks to the sympathy of the Morales government and the support of international partners, launched a project to develop their communities beyond national borders.²²⁹

Unlike the Alpine Convention, and similarly to the EU, MERCOSUR, or regional security organizations like NATO, the negotiating weight in the Andean Community is closely associated with traditional military, economic, and cultural power. Foreign ministries and diplomatic services lead the negotiations. Technical administrations are also involved on specific issues, such as trade ministries on trade matters and environmental ministries on environmental matters. In this regard, as in many countries, there is sometimes rivalry between foreign and environmental ministries. The latter are normally focal points for environmental treaties, which allows them to better master expertise, controlling communication flows.²³⁰ However, foreign ministries maintain a key role as far as international cooperation and development aid (*cooperación*) is concerned. For instance, if an Andean country were to receive aid for a specific activity, in most cases, such resources would need to be dealt with by specific offices in the foreign ministry.²³¹ It is commonly held that many environmental initiatives, including the Andean Environmental Agenda, would be impossible without aid, however it is not clear how much this depends from administrations not appropriating national funds for initiatives that could be funded through international aid.²³² Different, its role does not seem too dissimilar from that of EU funds for the Alpine Convention. Also similarly, each country has a certain number of officials dedicated to the Andean Community. They tend to form an administration within the administration and to generate bureaucratic effects.²³³

Currently, Andean states are all democratic, sharing a similar political system; previously, they all experienced various forms of non-democratic regimes. Just to mention the most recent, military *juntas* were in power in Colombia and Venezuela in the 1950s, in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador in

²²⁸ In 2009, the official name of Bolivia became, by government decree, “Plurinational State of Bolivia”, while in 2008 the new constitution of Ecuador mentions interculturality and plurinationality among its fundamental principles. The situation is different in Chile and Argentina, where the number of indigenous population living in mountains is low (e.g. the Aymara ethnic group), and more complicated in Peru and Colombia, which endured radical movements, such as Sendero Luminoso and the FARC. However, also the Bolivian experience was not easy, considering the tensions between the relatively rich and European lowlands (Santa Cruz) and the prevalently poor and indigenous *altiplano* (La Paz). See footnote 175.

²²⁹ See the article by Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary on the Aymara *sin fronteras* project (2009). On alternative globalization and sustainable development in Latin America, see also Carlos Milani et Chloé Keraghel (2009).

²³⁰ Some refer to the “focal point effect”, which is not to be confused with the homonymous effect devised by Thomas Schelling (1960). For the same phenomenon in a different setting, see Pamela Chasek (2009).

²³¹ This emerged clearly from the interview material.

²³² The Andean Environmental Agenda (AAA), for instance, was supported by the Spanish Ministry for the Environment, while the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded the *páramo* project. For an anthropological perspective on aid governing, read the book edited by David Mosse and David Lewis (2005); instead, on the “Alliance for Progress” and the failure of US development aid to Latin America in the 1960s, see Jeffrey Taffet (2007). Most of the economic literature on free-riding, rent-seeking, or the principal-agent problem generally looks at the issue more from the perspective of donor countries that want to make sure their aims are fulfilled. It usually misses several aspects pertaining to recipient administrations that genuinely want to make the most of what they receive. For a broad assessment of aid effectiveness with randomized trials, but still from the same perspective, see Abhijit Banerjee (2007).

²³³ On bureaucratic politics, see the classics by Graham Allison and Morton Halperin (1972) and Steve Smith (1989).

the 1970s, and in Chile until the end of the 1980s.²³⁴ The Andean states are relatively centralized, but they recently had various experiences with the decentralization process. Peru, for example, is considered as the most centralized state in the region. It tried to reduce the number of its subnational regions with the aim of increasing their power, but the project was rejected by referendum in 2005. In comparison, the Ecuadorian decentralization process started in the 1990s and is in a more advanced stage.²³⁵ In this case, Keating maybe applies both at the local and regional level, because of functional pressures on central governments. Unlike in the Alps, the presidencies, which rotate on a yearly basis, seem to have a negligible impact on the agenda of the community. The leadership of the secretariat and its stabilizing role seem to be central in this regard. In this sense, they interpret their role as formal—as chairmen—more than substantial—as presidents. However, states are eager to avoid setbacks during their presidencies. For instance, regarding the debate on the relevance of the Andean Community *vis-à-vis* the other integration processes in the Latin American region (MERCOSUR, UNASUR, etc.), according to an interviewee, one of the reasons why the extinction of the community is not an option is that no one would allow this to happen under its own presidency. Currently, the secretariat counts on at least fifty units of personnel and a yearly budget of \$5 million.²³⁶ The secretariat makes efficient use of available resources, considering the many sectors that have been at least partially communitarized: industrial and commercial development, social and environmental issues, political cooperation, and external relations.²³⁷ For example, it makes extensive use of videoconferencing, which is legally valid since 2004.²³⁸ In most cases, technical committees and working groups are led more by the secretariat than by the states, unlike in the Alpine case.²³⁹ The institutionalization process of the Andean Community is, therefore, particularly advanced. It resembles that of the EU and it is certainly more developed than the Alpine Convention.

It is easier to think of the Andean Community in terms of balance of power. In the late 1960s, the community was launched also because of dissatisfaction with the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALC, now ALADI) integration process, led by Brazil and Argentina, *i.e.*, the main regional hegemon and its main pretender.²⁴⁰ The number of countries is limited—just four—and they are split between two relatively large and wealthy countries—Peru and Colombia—and two smaller and less wealthy ones—Bolivia and Ecuador).²⁴¹ There is no clear hegemon in the Andean region. However, positions are quite variable, depending on the issue at stake. Like in the EU, the community is more important for the two smaller than for the two largest members, especially

²³⁴ On foreign relations of military regimes in Latin America, see David Mares (2001).

²³⁵ For a continental perspective, see the CEPAL report on *Descentralización en América Latina* (Finot 2001). On the Peruvian process, see Eduardo Ballón (2008), while on Ecuador, see the book by Jonas Frank (2007).

²³⁶ The budget of the secretariat was of seven million dollars before the withdrawal of Venezuela in 2006. On the effects of the Venezuelan withdrawal, see Rita Giacalone (2010).

²³⁷ For a full list, see *infra* (p. 92).

²³⁸ See Decision 597 (2004). This is facilitated by the official use of a common language.

²³⁹ This also emerged clearly from the interview material.

²⁴⁰ See, for instance, the article by Elizabeth Ferris (1981), confirmed in an interview with Carlos Lleras (1992).

²⁴¹ Refer to the official data published in the *CIA World Factbook* (2010):

	Area	Population	GDP	Oil reserves	Mil. spending	
Colombia	1,138,914 km ²	44,205,293	\$231.3 bil.	1,668.0 mil. bbl	3.4% of GDP	* Chile and Venezuela withdrew in 1976 and 2006, respectively.
Peru	1,285,216 km ²	29,907,003	\$128.9 bil.	460.8 mil. bbl	1.5% of GDP	
Venezuela*	912,050 km ²	27,223,228	\$357.6 bil.	98,590.0 mil. bbl	1.2% of GDP	
Chile*	756,102 km ²	16,746,491	\$152.1 bil.	150 mil. bbl	2.7% of GDP	
Ecuador	283,561 km ²	14,790,608	\$56.3 bil.	3,640.0 mil. bbl	0.9% of GDP	
Bolivia	1,098,581 km ²	9,947,418	\$17.8 bil.	465 mil. bbl	1.3% of GDP	

as far as trade is concerned.²⁴² Within the Andean Community, there is also a fairly strong ideological rift between countries that have signed FTAs with the US, *i.e.*, Peru and Colombia, *versus* countries that have joined the Chavez-led Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).²⁴³ In this regard, the withdrawal of Venezuela from the Andean Community in 2006 played against its ALBA allies, Bolivia and Ecuador, in the ideological struggle, giving them a tougher time to counter the larger members Peru and Colombia. On security affairs, for how much their current relations may have improved, Peru and Ecuador still fought a war between 1995 and 1998 at the end of a border quarrel that lasted several decades,²⁴⁴ while Colombia and Venezuela still experience regular crises over the FARC *guerrilla*. On the continental level, traditional alliances date back to the War of the Pacific at the end of the 19th century and were revived by the military regimes. They were Chile with Brazil and Ecuador against Peru with Bolivia and Argentina. For the most part, they are outdated, but collective and institutional memory is hard to delete, and it sometimes produces alignment effects.²⁴⁵ Even if, as we have already seen, on ecological issues, for instance, Peru lags behind, while Colombia leads, within the legal fiction, all members are equal. Still, it is difficult for a small country to maintain an isolated position for long at international negotiations. Moreover, Bolivian institutions, in particular, may have limited capacity to follow the negotiations, similarly to Paraguay within MERCOSUR, which may lead, in turn, to free-riding effects, *i.e.*, to benefit from the efforts of the other members without contributing equally.²⁴⁶ However, even a small country such as Bolivia can veto community initiatives, as it recently did for an Andean plan on migration, proposed by Ecuador, for divergences on legal interpretation.²⁴⁷ Both hegemonic and isolationist positions are short-lived in the Andean Community.

International relations scholars often highlight the fact that the main approaches to European integration, particularly neofunctionalism, do not seem to apply to the rest of the world, especially in the Americas.²⁴⁸ However, the development of the Andean Community strikes for its resemblance to that of a smaller EU, to the point that some refer to the phenomenon of “institutional mimesis.”²⁴⁹ This is also thanks to the institutional cooperation between the EU commission and its secretariat (former JUNAC).²⁵⁰ In its founding documents, the community adopted an ambitious framework, aiming at achieving “integrated development”, intended as a cooperative kind of development that aims at avoiding production redundancies and regional imbalances. According to this approach, Andean countries should not compete against each other; they should, instead, cooperate

²⁴² In 2009, according to Andean Community trade data, exports to member states accounted to 13.25% of total exports for Ecuador, 9.09% for Bolivia, and 6.90% and 6.25% for Colombia and Peru, respectively; imports from the Andean Community accounted to 17.15% of total imports for Ecuador, 12.80% for Bolivia, 11.28% for Peru, but only 4.99% for Colombia (elaboration by the author).

²⁴³ For the debate on the potential of ALBA for regional integration, see the book by Claudio Katz (2006) and the articles by José Segrelles (2006) and Andrés Serbin (2007).

²⁴⁴ On the conflict and its solution, see the books by Eduardo Toche *et al.* (1998) and edited by Gabriel Marcela and Richard Downes (1999); see also the recent publication by the Plan Binacional de Desarrollo, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the end of the conflict (2009).

²⁴⁵ In this regard, refer, in particular, to the works of Jack Child (1979; 1985).

²⁴⁶ On economic and institutional aspects of MERCOSUR, see, for instance, the works of Roberto Bouzas (2001; 2003).

²⁴⁷ This information emerged from the interview material. Since the 1990s, several decisions were adopted in this sector, including the Andean passport, social security, consular affairs, customs documents, work-related migrations, document recognition, border integration and management, etc.

²⁴⁸ For example, see the classical works of Ernst Haas (1970; 1965), but also Andrew Hurrell (1995) or Andrew Gamble (2007).

²⁴⁹ For instance, Jorge Quindimil (2002).

²⁵⁰ See *above* (p. 82).

to achieve higher standards of development.²⁵¹ This approach diverged substantially from the current emphasis on competition in the EU, but had affinities with the cooperative framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Despite the fact that some of the early protagonists, such as the Peruvian president Fernando Belaúnde, insisted on infrastructure integration (*integración física*), *i.e.*, transport and communications projects.²⁵² In the 1970s, the first step consisted of industrial planning (*complementarización económica*) aimed at achieving import substitution. Little by little, the Andean Community expanded towards various sectors: agricultural development, Andean SMEs, automotive policy, border development, civil society, common external policy, competition, culture, customs, democracy and human rights, drug control, energy, environmental issues, financial integration, food security, industrial and commercial development, infrastructure, intellectual property, international aid, investment, macroeconomic policy, migrations, political cooperation, price control, quality control, regional development, risk prevention, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, social and labor issues, social issues, telecommunication, tourism, trade of goods and services, transport, and youth.

Despite a reference to the mountains since its inception, the social and environmental dimension, for instance, represent among of the latest expansions of the Andean Community,²⁵³ to the point that the Andean Community is moving from the concept of integrated development to that of “integral development” (*desarrollo integral*), to be intended as an alternative kind of development, more balanced and independent, that takes into consideration the different aspects of life.²⁵⁴ Interestingly, this concept first emerged in the 1990s and it concerned the industrial development of Bolivia and Ecuador and their use of natural resources, as well as the creation of “border integration areas” (*zonas de integración fronteriza* or ZIFs) under the Andean Community.²⁵⁵ In the last decade, this concept was progressively extended to include “alternative” development and, particularly, rural development, going basically in the opposite direction to the EU, which went from the

²⁵¹ See, for instance, the study by Roberto Durán and Fernando Lobos (1976), criticizing a regional approach that is excessively centered on economic issues, as well as the article on joint industrial planning by Germánico Salgado (1975) and on Andean multinational enterprises (EMAs) by Rachelle Cherol and José Núñez (1983). See also the more recent article by Ángel Casas on the history of the Andean Community from a development perspective (2001).

²⁵² See again the proceedings of the 1990 Caracas conference (Cabrera Ferrada 1991), as well as the article on physical integration by Hernán Latorre (1975).

²⁵³ See the 1997 Sucre Protocol, which modified the 1969 Cartagena Agreement and which was codified with Decision 563 (2003); see, in particular, new article 3(2)(d), which establishes that “the following economic and social cooperation programs and aims shall be carried out in a concerted effort: ... activities for the use and preservation of natural resources and the environment”, while new article 128 further establishes that “the Member Countries shall undertake joint actions to make better use of their renewable and non-renewable natural resources and ensure the conservation and improvement of the environment.”

²⁵⁴ For further deepening on this kind of approach, refer, for instance, to the works of Ignacy Sachs on “eco-socio-development” and “inclusive development” (1997, 2004, 2007, 2007).

²⁵⁵ It is as such that the concept was included in the new articles 111 and 126: “Industrial Development Programs shall ... provide for the implementation of a program for the comprehensive industrialization [*industrialización integral*] of [Bolivia and Ecuador’s] natural resources” and “the Member Countries shall undertake actions to promote the comprehensive development [*desarrollo integral*] of border regions and their effective incorporation in the national and subregional Andean economies”, respectively. See also the special issue of the Venezuelan journal *Aldea Mundo* on ZIFs, particularly the overview article by Socorro Ramírez (2005).

CAP to territorial cohesion. However, the Andean Community did not go as far as establishing an Andean Common Agricultural Policy (PACA).²⁵⁶

Over the years, the spillover effects produced by the Andean Community are therefore remarkable. Its institutional development—the so-called Andean Integration System (SAI)—is extremely advanced, arguably the most advanced after the EU, counting a presidential council, a ministerial council, a trade commission, a parliament, a secretariat, a court, a development bank, a reserve fund, health, labor, and business consultative bodies, as well as a regional university. Most of these institutions were created in the 1970s, during the institution building phase of the community, and reformed in the 1990s, at the height of the new wave of regionalism.²⁵⁷ It goes without saying that, like the EU and most regional integration processes, the community experienced periods of rapid growth (the 1970s and the 1990s) and deep crisis (the 1980s and, somehow, the 2000s).



Figure 14: Scheme of the Andean Integration System.²⁵⁸

Concerning its institutional structure, it is worth noting that, despite the fact that the Court of Justice of the Andean Community (TJCA) is supposed to sanction non-compliance with the decisions of the community, which can be directly applicable, the implementation process is uneven.²⁵⁹ Some observe that it is “more on paper than in reality”:²⁶⁰ besides the fact that this is true for any legal measure, this does not do justice to the genuine efforts of at least two generations of political leaders and civil servants that built the Andean Community around the very concrete “vertebral column” of Latin America that are the Andes. The Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), for instance, is more a development bank (like EBRD) than a fund (like ERDF) and is arguably one of the

²⁵⁶ Refer, in particular, to Decisions 501 (2001) on ZIFs, 614 (2005) on the Andean Strategy for Alternative, Integral and Sustainable Development, 621 (2005) and 708 (2008) on the Rural Development and Agricultural Productivity Fund. A proposal for an Andean CAP was first introduced in the early 1990s, but failed to gain momentum and collapsed over trade issues in the early 2000s.

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²⁵⁷ See again footnotes 7 and 43 (*supra*).

²⁵⁸ Published on the website of the Andean Community (last accessed: July 16, 2010).

²⁵⁹ See footnote 210 (*supra*).

²⁶⁰ See, for instance, José Andueza (1986).

PLICIT integration policies ... and policies aiming at the increase of international competition.”²⁶² Despite its origins in the trade debate,²⁶³ the idea that, paraphrasing CEPAL, “whatever regional arrangement brings us Latin Americans closer together and does not make us more distant from the world is a step in the right direction” would strongly influence Latin American regional integration since the 1990s.

Therefore, it should not surprise us if, in South America alone, alongside OAS (Organization of American States), CEPAL, ALADI, SELA (Latin American Economic System), as well as “sub-regional initiatives” such as the Andean Community, the Amazon Treaty, and MERCOSUR, we see IIR-SA coming up in 2000, ALBA in 2004, UNASUR in 2008, and, most recently, CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), just to count the major regional initiatives. This might seem confusing, but it constitutes a dense tissue of regional integration. After all, the situation is not too different from the European case, where the EU coexists alongside UNECE, OECD, NATO, the Council of Europe, EFTA (European Free Trade Association), OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), together with dozens of other regional agreements, including the Alpine Convention. In Latin America, it is significant that, among those frameworks, the Andes, despite the consolidated division between Tropical and Southern Andes, are a common referent for development initiatives. However, we saw that this usually refers to the Andean countries more than the Andean ecoregion, *strictu sensu*. Like in the case of the Alpine Convention, this seems to prove the critics of ecoregionalism right, as the ecoregional ideal is often not even acknowledged. However, there is a growing attention for this dimension, especially from an environmental perspective (AAA, CONDESAN, etc.), and the mountain range remains a significant referent for political action. Again like in the Alps, the Andean Community establishes patterns of cooperation at the regional level and their effects depend on the disposition of the actors involved, particularly the national governments.

Concluding remarks

In this text, we first defined what is an ecoregion, looking at definitions in ecology, geography, political science, and international relations; then, we observed that if ecoregionalism is an ideology, it can be tested both in theory and in practice. After presenting critical perspectives on ecoregionalism and proposing a historical overview of the process of ecoregionalization, we provided an example of the ecoregional ideal in action (the Alpine Convention) and a counterexample (the Andean Community), in order to question ecoregionalism. A polarization between socio-economic and environmental approaches to regionalism emerged from the literature, while these examples highlighted the political relevance of ecoregional initiatives. As concluding remarks, given the ongoing negotiations, especially in the Balkans and in the Caucasus, the following paragraphs will question the viability of the Alpine Convention, on the one hand, and of the Andean Community, on the other, as models for regional mountain agreements. Finally, we will question how mountain initiatives affect the manner in which these morphologies are appropriated and transformed into territories.

²⁶² Quoted from CEPAL, *El regionalismo abierto en América Latina y el Caribe* (1994, translation by the author). See also the earlier report *El desarrollo sustentable*, always by CEPAL (1991).

²⁶³ Particularly, in the debate over whether regional trade agreements, pursuant to article XXIV of GATT 1947, were increasing or deviating trade. That same year, the Uruguay Round had come to a close, establishing the WTO and producing an “Understanding on Article XXIV.” Two years later, the WTO created a Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) (Decision WT/L/127, February 6, 1996). In those years, while dependency theory was losing ground and the anti-globalization movement was not in the air yet, interdependency theory was the buzzword of the day.

Questioning models

The Alpine Convention is often portrayed not only as the first regional mountain agreement, but also as the only existing model.²⁶⁴ The Andean Community, however, can be considered as an alternative and even predating model.²⁶⁵ In the previous sections, the two cases were presented on the basis of the main questions outlined in the theoretical part of this paper. The following paragraphs will compare the two models, according to the order followed in the analysis of both cases. As far as the ecological dimension is concerned, the Andes are much larger and present a greater degree of diversity. While the Alpine Convention includes the whole Alpine Arc, the Andean Community currently does not include the Southern (Argentine and Chilean) and Venezuelan Andes. Economically, in the Alps, the two dominant sectors are tourism and transport, while climate and water are emerging issues. For the Andes, mining and water are object of great concern, while transport infrastructure is being upgraded regionally. If demographic patterns vary throughout the Alps, the depopulation of mountain regions in favor of urban centers is the prevailing feature in the Andes. Moreover, the economic disparity between the two ecoregions must be taken into account. Both the Alpine Convention and the Andean Community are product of the capitals and not of the locals. In the environmental field, two leading NGOs can be identified: CIPRA in the Alps and CONDESAN in the Andes, although the Andean Community does not recognize official observers, unlike the Alpine Convention. Both ranges represent mobilizing factors, but they compete with other elements, such as norm circulation. Unlike Alpine states, the same official language is shared by all Andean states and the indigenous question plays an important political role.

While military and economic balance of power seems to be reflected in negotiations within the Andean Community, this is not so important in the Alps where other factors, such as the decentralization process and the institutions involved, play a greater role. Conversely, if the rotating presidency is extremely important in the Alps, the role of the secretariat is more prominent in the Andean Community. In both cases, while all parties may take the lead on certain issues, hegemonic positions do not go far, isolated positions are difficult to hold, and smaller countries practice free riding, also because of lack of institutional capacity. The Andean Community recently experienced military regimes and is divided along ideological lines. An armed conflict occurred between two of its members in the 1990s and traditional alliances still impact negotiations. Despite its comprehensive approach, the Alpine Convention remains a regional environmental agreement, while the Andean Community is a regional integration organization, focusing more on social and economic issues. If the Alpine Convention did not follow the model of the EU, its Andean counterpart did, especially considering institutionalization levels and the legal character of community decisions. Spillover effects are fewer in the Alps than in the Andes, also because of the greater dependence on the EU of the former and the greater institutionalization of the latter. In both cases, mountain regions mobilize actors and ecoregional frameworks establish patterns of cooperation. The disposition of national governments plays a key role in this regard.

It is not easy to assess these models, let alone for their intrinsic diversity. But it is precisely their diversity that compels to question the common idea that the Alpine Convention is the only existing model for regional mountain agreements. As new agreements are being negotiated in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the Andean Community imposes itself as an alternative model. In the Balkans (SEE), for instance, because of the wars of the 1990s, the security outlook is more akin to that of the Andes. The same can be argued for socio-economic features: depopulation and lower incomes. Ecologically, instead, their lesser extension points in the direction of the Alps, as well as the

²⁶⁴ Refer to footnote 122 (*supra*). For an interesting perspective on the Alps as a model for the geographic representation of other mountain regions, see the article by Marina Frolova (2001).

²⁶⁵ See the box on the Andean Initiative of the Mountain Partnership (*supra*).

important presence of the EU. Member states in the region are, in fact, two: Greece and Bulgaria. Also similarly to the Alps, the region is ethnically and linguistically divided. Like Andean states, instead, Balkan countries transitioned to liberal democracy only recently.²⁶⁶ Similar observations can be formulated as far as the Caucasus is concerned, with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) instead of the EU.²⁶⁷ The relative youth of Balkan and Caucasian independent states must also be taken into consideration.

The ongoing negotiations increase the need for a debate on the appropriate models of mountain agreements, also considering that a proliferation of such agreements is possible, such as in the case of regional seas agreements. Recently, the Mountain Forum counted not less than 140 mountain ranges, at least 30% of which run across borders.²⁶⁸ In terms of environment and security, Himalayan and Central Asian ranges, for instance, seem to have more in common with the Andes than with the Alps, despite the presence of significant differences, such as the size of the relevant

²⁶⁶ On the Balkan initiative, see the report by MAKMONTANA (Mitreva 2005); for an assessment of the current situation of international cooperation, see the BASF report (Andonovski and Pop-Stojanov 2006); on environmental policy in the Balkan region, see the report by REC (Minkova 2006), as well as the document prepared by UNDP for the VI Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", held in Belgrade on October 10-12, 2007 (Stritih et al. 2007). In 2004 and 2006, Italy hosted two intergovernmental meetings in Bolzano to share the experience of the Alpine Convention and for the discussion of a legal instrument for the environmental protection and sustainable development of the Balkan region. A draft text was negotiated with the support of UNEP and EURAC. In 2007, despite the optimism that followed the Belgrade Conference, the negotiation process stalled mainly over the status of Kosovo and the involvement of Bosnia. In the mean time, Finland had supported the Dinaric Arc Initiative (DAI) or "ecoregion" (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania), a mini-program managed by the "usual suspects" (UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, CBD, WWF, IUCN, etc.) and financing a wide array of projects, ranging from ecological corridors to cultural heritage and from scientific cooperation to policy integration. In 2008, UNEP launched the Dinaric Arc and Balkans Environment Outlook (DABEO), making the two initiatives converge. In 2009, UNEP joined forces with the Slovenian presidency of the Alpine Convention and the negotiations gained new momentum, also thanks to the financial support of international aid. It is possible that a framework convention for the Balkan region will be opened for signature at the XI Alpine Conference, to be held in Brdo (Slovenia) on March 3, 2011. On environment and security, see also the proceedings of the two ENVSEC conferences (2002, 2004), another initiative which interestingly moved on dealing with mining hazard, natural risk, and water management, also involving OSCE and NATO, besides UNEP, UNDP, etc.

²⁶⁷ On the Caucasus initiative, see the background paper prepared by UNEP and REC for the government-nominated expert meeting held in Bolzano, UNEP and REC Caucasus, "Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions of the Caucasus: A Case for Intergovernmental Cooperation," in *Meeting of the government-nominated experts for the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions of the Caucasus* (Bolzano 2009). Italy, on April 28-29, 2009—, "Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions of the Caucasus: A Case for Intergovernmental Cooperation.." Besides the Bolzano Statement, see also the Vaduz Ministerial Statement of November 16, 2007. In 2005, Italy hosted another intergovernmental meeting, organized by UNEP in the framework of the Mountain Partnership, to share the experience of the Alpine Convention also with the Caucasus region. Two-hundred delegates participated to a meeting "Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in the Caucasus" organized by the Regional Environmental Center (REC) in 2003. Recently, a new declaration to be adopted at a ministerial meeting to be held in Teheran was prepared at a new expert meeting held in Bolzano on November 25-26, 2009. The Caucasus initiative is financially supported in particular by Germany and Liechtenstein. In 2007, Germany supported the creation, for instance, of a Transboundary Joint Secretariat (TJS) for the Southern Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan).

²⁶⁸ Americas: Andes, Appalachians, Baja California, Cordillera de Talamanca, Guiana Highlands, Rockies, and Sierra Madre Del Sur; Europe: Alps, Balkans, Carpathians, Caucasus, Cordillera Cantabrica, Dinaric Alps, Jura, Kjolen, Pindhos, Pyrenees, Rhodopes, and Sudetes; Asia Pacific: Altai, Annamites, Arakan Yoma, Asir, Bintang, Chang-pai Shan, Dawna, Himalayas, Kelabit, Ningling Shan, Pegunungan Maoke, Tien Shan, Truong Son, and Zagros; Africa: Adamawas, Ahaggar, Atlas, Drakensberg, Eastern African Highlands, Ethiopian Highlands, Fouta Djallon, Mitumbars, Nimbas, and Tibesti.

ecoregions and of the states concerned.²⁶⁹ In some cases, especially where no other significant regional integration organization exists, alternative models of regional mountain agreements might be envisaged. At the time being, the Andean Community is the only existing alternative to the Alpine Convention.²⁷⁰

Questioning territoriality

In this age of reflection on the fate of modernity, particularly on the postmodern (“French Theory”) or neo-medieval/neo-feudal nature (English School) of world order, the questioning of the three commonly accepted constitutive elements of the modern state (government, population, and territory) occupied some of the sharpest minds of our time.²⁷¹ Michel Foucault immensely contributed to the problematization of the former two with his studies on health and sexuality and his speculations on postmodern governing. However, Foucault’s contribution on territory is reduced to some lectures he delivered in academic year 1977-1978, which remained unpublished until 2004 (English translation in 2007).²⁷² Since the early 1980s, some students of his both in Europe and in the Americas, such as Claude Raffestin in Geneva, Friedrich Kratochwil at Columbia, or John Ruggie at Harvard, also contributed to the reflections on “territoriality”, which we can define as the process through which the territory is known and appropriated over time.²⁷³ The concept is close to that of “governmentality” (in French: *gouvernementalité*), as it is defined by Foucault himself (the process through which a population is known and secured, also by itself), which is often confused with “governance.”²⁷⁴ Even if the latter has become a fuzzy buzzword that has lost much of its meaning, many international environmental scholars use it as the main tool to understand the often confuse process of environmental policymaking, especially referring to the important role of IGOs, local governments, NGOs, and the scientific community, particularly compared to the security or finance sector. From this perspective, Saskia Sassen’s reflections on territoriality do not add much: according to her, territoriality is shifting beyond nation-states toward global networks of financial centers and local activists and toward new transnational and transboundary jurisdictions, rightly emphasizing the need to integrate temporality in spatial analysis.²⁷⁵ But what is territoriality, besides “something that has to do with territory”?

Also the early works on territoriality by Kratochwil and Ruggie were more reflections on the confusing governance of the EU, which defies many tenets of modern statehood, than on territoriality as defined, for instance, by Raffestin, who emphasizes the role of information and its temporality. It does not surprise that some scholars criticized Ruggie for falling into a sort of “territorial

²⁶⁹ On “China, India, and the Environment”, read, *inter alia*, the recent article by Kamal Bawa *et al.* (2010).

²⁷⁰ The Carpathian Convention essentially reproduces the model of the Alpine Convention (p. 43, *supra*).

²⁷¹ On postmodernity, read, for instance, Anthony Giddens (1990), Bruno Latour (1991), and Ulrich Beck (1992). On neomedievalism, see the many contributions by the English School, from Hedley Bull’s *Anarchical Society* (1977) to Andrew Hurrell (1995) and Andrew Gamble (2007). See also, in the US, John Ruggie (1993) and Stephen Krasner (1999, 1993).

²⁷² Read, by Michel Foucault, the courses at the Collège de France *Sécurité, territoire, population* (1977-1978) Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population: Cours Au Collège De France (1977-1978)*, ed. François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Michel Senellart, Hautes Études (Paris: Seuil, 2004).) and *Naissance de la biopolitique* (1978-1979—, *Naissance De La Biopolitique: Cours Au Collège De France (1978-1979)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).), published in 2004. See also, *inter alia*, Pierre Lascombes (1994), Giorgio Agamben (1997), Bruno Latour (1999), and Toni Negri (2006).

²⁷³ See, in particular, the articles “Ecogenèse territoriale et territorialité” by Raffestin (1986), “Of systems, boundaries, and territoriality” by Kratochwil (1986), and “Territoriality and beyond” by Ruggie (1993). See also p. 28 (*supra*).

²⁷⁴ See Foucault (2004).

²⁷⁵ See Sassen (2006).

trap”, in the sense that the same space does not produce the same political outcomes over time and that, for instance, economic flows exceed a given territory, especially with the end of the Cold War.²⁷⁶ It is, in fact, a truism to say that, if territory of the state is produced also by the government over time, and if governmentality has significantly evolved in recent decades, with the crisis of the nation-state after WWII and the emergence, in particular, of regional integration processes such as the EU or MERCOSUR, but also such as the Andean Community and the Alpine Convention, the production of the territory has also evolved. Not to speak of the ownership of the “means of production” of modern territory, which can range from one extreme (the patrimonial state) to the other (the republic). The existence of regional integration processes—as well as their policies of territorial cohesion, physical integration, etc.—actually shifts the way governments and people reappropriate their land and adds a new dimension to territoriality. This is particularly innovative when this new dimension does not coincide with old borders and follows ecological patterns. The presence now of the Alpine Convention and the Andean Community create, in fact, expectations also at the ecoregional scale, at least for some people. When actors mobilize around an ecological area, political dynamics are somewhat affected and national territoriality is partly redefined, in its continuous process of reproduction.

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²⁷⁶ See the article “The territorial trap” by John Agnew (1994). A similar argument, but more nuanced, can be found in John Allen (2007; 1998).

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