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Cross-border regionalism in the EU and ASEAN: another dimension of the “varieties of regionalism”

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the governance norms of micro-regional cross-border cooperation (CBC) in Europe and Southeast Asia. We ask why world-wide cross-border micro-regional institutions, though at first sight pursuing similar economic and socio-political objectives, markedly differ in their institutional design. Guided by arguments derived from sociological institutionalism, we argue that cross-border institutions adopt the governance norms of the regional organization to which they are linked. Accordingly, while in Europe CBC is characterized by normative ideas, supranational tendencies tamed by subsidiarity, bottom-up processes, liberal participatory norms and legal formality, Southeast Asian cross-border institutions are more material, intergovernmental, hierarchical, state-controlled and informal. Cross-border regions established in countries acceding to a regional organization localize the latter's governance norms if these deviate markedly from entrenched extant normative arrangements. The diversity of CBC in the two world regions studied suggests that the ‘varieties of regionalism’ concept also applies to micro-regionalism.

KEYWORDS

Cross-border cooperation; regional integration; EU; ASEAN; varieties of regionalism

Introduction

In the early post-Cold War period, institutional responses to a rapidly accelerating process of globalization intensified. What we can observe from this period is an increasing vertical and horizontal differentiation of the global governance architecture. In its vertical dimension it is subdivided into a hierarchy of levels, horizontally into policy regimes in a wide array of issue areas such as trade, finance, disarmament, human rights and climate change, to name just a few. Vertical levels include the existing global, regional and bilateral state-to-state levels of agency, while interregional fora and micro-regional cross-border cooperation (CBC) schemes are novelties that proliferated in the 1990s (Rüländ 2010).

This article focuses on the institutional dimension of micro-regional CBC understood here as the ‘institutional trans-border collective action of sub-national authorities located in proximity to national borders,’ often linked to a regional organization (RO).¹ Europe pioneered CBC, dating back to the late 1950s (Hrbek and Weyand

1994). The deepening of European integration and, in particular, EU enlargement in the 1990s and 2000s have amplified this development and led to the formation of many new cooperative arrangements in the form of Euregios, Euroregions, working committees, Eurodistricts and Eurometropolises. At the same time, CBC schemes also emerged in Southeast Asia and subsequently in other world regions (Brunet-Jailly 2022). With them a growing body of literature in disciplines such as political science, sociology and geography has examined CBC and micro-regionalism. While these studies have provided many insights into the evolution of individual CBC schemes, including their governance arrangements, economic development, socio-cultural characteristics as well as their obstacles and shortcomings, much of this literature is case-based and undertheorized.

In this article, we seek to overcome some of these lacunae via a theory-guided comparative study of CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia. Our overarching question is: Why do institutions which at first sight pursue similar objectives, namely strengthening governance to solve cross-border problems in an age of accelerating globalization, markedly vary in their governance norms? We argue that the micro-regional cross-border institutions of the two regions have been driven by quite different norms because they tend to adopt the governance norms of the ROs they are linked to: the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, CBC may vary within ROs that have been enlarged by new members which deviate from the core region in terms of historical experiences and normative outlook. Eastern Europe is – as our empirical analysis suggests – a case in point. The concept of ‘varieties of regionalism’ (Hurrell 1995) thus also applies to cross-border micro-regionalism.

In the remainder of the article, we first trace the evolution of CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia, including a brief description of their structural properties. Thereafter, we develop an analytical framework informed by successive generations of sociological institutionalism and explicate our methodology. The empirical part examines how far key norms of both ROs find their equivalents in CBC schemes established in both regions. The conclusion summarizes the findings and reflects on future research directions.

Cross-border cooperation schemes in Europe and Southeast Asia: the settings

Research has identified multiple functions of CBC for regional integration. Among such functions are market opening in peripheral regions, alleviating regional wealth disparities, mitigating cross-border governance problems, promoting regional unity, pooling strength for competition with other regions,² expediting the accession of new members into a RO or acting as a surrogate mechanism during phases of stagnating regional cooperation (J. Scott 2015).

The first CBC schemes originated in Western Europe in the late 1950s. They included the Regio Basiliensis connecting the Swiss, French and German borderlands at the Upper Rhine and the Euregios along the Dutch-German border. After a first wave in the 1970s, cross-border regions in the form of Euregios, and Euroregions proliferated in the 1990s, especially in eastern (but also in northern and southern) Europe. Somewhat later, Eurodistricts and Eurometropolises became additional formats of CBC. Today the Council of Europe counts 102 CBC

arrangements,³ by far the largest number and greatest density in any part of the world. A corollary of this density is considerable overlapping, but also the nesting of CBC schemes of varying size and accordingly tailored functions (Kaucic and Sohn 2022).

Southeast Asian CBC, better known as growth triangles (GT) or growth polygons, started in 1989 when the Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong proposed the creation of the Sijori triangle. Sijori initially covered the city state, the southern Malaysian state of Johor and the Indonesian Riau islands. In 1996 Sijori enlarged, adding more Malaysian states and Indonesian provinces (Thambipillai 1998, 254). The triangle was subsequently renamed the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore growth triangle (IMS-GT). With the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand growth triangle (IMT-GT) and the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), two additional growth polygons emerged in the mid-1990s, which also adopted new members after their formation. In 1999, the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle Area covering 10- and later 13 – border provinces was created, to be followed in 2012 by so the far still greatly under-institutionalized Timor Leste-Indonesia-Australia Growth Triangle (TIA-GT) with Australia's Northern Territory, Eastern Indonesia and Timor Leste as members. While we categorize these polygons as cases of CBC, fitting Perkmann's (2003) definition, we do not include in our analysis the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), launched in 1992 with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). As the name indicates, GMS is a sub-regional forum consisting of entire nation states.⁴ The only sub-national members are the two southern Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guansi which, however, act as extended arms of the central government.⁵ By contrast, the altogether 13 economic corridors and sub-corridors created in GMS, IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA⁶ fully meet our definition of CBC.⁷ Similar to Europe, overlapping exists among CBC institutions. The economic corridors qualify as cases of institutional nesting.

A superficial glance at CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia suggests that schemes differ significantly in at least four ways. First, in Europe organizational variation of CBC schemes is markedly greater than in Southeast Asia. Second, major differences exist with regard to government systems. While in (Western) Europe, CBC tends to be embedded in liberal democracies, political regimes in Southeast Asia cover the whole gamut from autocracies to electoral democracies. In recent years democratic backsliding has strengthened authoritarian tendencies in the region (Croissant and Haynes 2021); a development also observable in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Hungary. In Southeast Asia, an integral part of democratic backsliding is re-centralization, even in countries that have previously undergone profound decentralization reforms. Southeast Asian and to a lesser extent Eastern European central governments thus tend to control CBC, to varying degrees relegating local governments to transmission belts implementing centrally devised projects in border regions. Third, Southeast Asian GTs and growth corridors are larger than most of their European counterparts in terms of area and population. Conversely, border regions, especially in Western Europe, are more densely populated. Fourth, and last, socio-economic disparities in Southeast Asian border regions tend to be wider than in Europe, despite the EU's eastern enlargement.

Analytical framework and methodology

Unlike macro-regionalism, the majority of CBC research is undertheorized. Existing analyses with theoretical ambition often focus on scalarity (Karim 2019) and thereby frequently rely on Hooghe and Marks's multi-level governance approach (Hooghe and Marks 2003). While their framework is indeed applicable to CBC, its utility for our research question is limited. We thus propose an alternative approach that may better conceptualize the emergence and resilience of the diverse normative underpinnings of ROs and their impact on CBC in a cross-regional setting. Arguments borrowed from successive generations of sociological institutionalism help us to achieve this objective.

Regional integration and CBC reflect the institutional decisions of their initiators and proponents. By institutions, we mean 'an enduring set of norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that shape the expectations, interests, and behavior of actors' (Goldstein et al. 2000, 387). The way these institutions operate more than anything else depends on their normative configuration. Norms, understood as 'shared expectations about appropriate behaviour held by a collectivity of actors' (Checkel 1999, 83) determine how regional, national and sub-national cross-border actors interpret and practice the rules and decision-making procedures of regional institutions and affect the governance of CBC.

In this article, we adopt a key argument of sociological institutionalism, positing that the institutional environment of front-runner institutions tends to appropriate major features of the latter (Di Maggio and Powell 1983; Krasner 1995). In the field of regional integration, the EU is the leading organization in Europe, in Southeast Asia it is ASEAN. Both shape the ideas and norms the public associates with regionalism in the respective region. By consciously focusing on *two*, region-specific models of emulation, we avoided the Western-centrism of first-generation sociological institutionalism based on the tacit universalist assumption that Western institutions are the gold standard to be emulated elsewhere. We can thus expect that CBC schemes in both regions reproduce the key norms of the regional organization to which they are directly or indirectly attached. Given the sticky nature of institutions, we further expect that the norms CBC champions are fairly stable and resilient to fundamental change.

Sociological institutionalists name three major mechanisms for processes of institutional emulation: coercion, mimicry and (professional) socialization. Coercion exists if institutions are dependent on 'cultural expectations in the society in which organizations function' (Di Maggio and Powell 1983, 150). As CBC in Europe as well as in Southeast Asia has often been equated to a building block for regional integration, it is thus likely that ROs expect CBC schemes to adopt their normative DNA. The EU Commission and in Southeast Asia, in particular, ASEAN member governments regard the adoption of the respective RO's governance norms as a major requisite for the achievement of this objective. Also, the existence of a common legal environment is conducive for the respective adoption of the EU's and ASEAN's key norms. In Europe legal culture is highly formalized and rests on 'hard law,' in Southeast Asia it is sovereignty based, pragmatic and informal, informed by 'soft law' (Chong 2019). Finally, CBC in Europe and in Southeast Asia is greatly dependent on ideational and, even more, material support from their respective RO. In the EU, it is Interreg funding, on which CBC relies. Although in Southeast Asia

funding depends more on international donors such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations and the Islamic Development Bank,⁸ these actors share or at least do not object to the position of ASEAN member countries that CBC schemes must be conceptualized in line with the grouping's repository of governance norms.

Mimicry is the second driver of the adoption of the ROs' respective norms. While in the case of coercion the driver for the adoption of norms is 'external' and adoption is more or less obligatory, mimicry is a voluntary process whereby actorness is located in the norm recipient, that is, CBC schemes. Actors adopt norms and practices from front-runner institutions to cope with uncertainty. When CBC emerged in Europe and Southeast Asia, its conditions for success were uncertain at best. Moreover, globalization-driven increases in interdependence, with their rise of new cross-border governance issues, likewise heightens uncertainty and, thus, the motivation for mimicry. Finally, it is also a popular device among institutions to increase their legitimacy. As CBC schemes are often seen critically by national governments and in order to solicit further support from the respective RO, CBC schemes need legitimacy and thus tend to adopt the latter's governance norms.

Third and finally, (professional) socialization also contributes to the adoption of the respective ROs' core norms, although it is the weakest factor. Socialization is the result of normative pressures triggered by similar professional training and career patterns. Such processes can also be witnessed in the field of CBC. As we will show in the empirical part, over time CBC in both regions underwent increasing rationalization and professionalization. These processes have been advanced by the personnel in charge of CBC at the regional, national and local levels, which has been educated in universities with similar curricula, have had similar bureaucratic work experiences and in its career circulated through the three government levels named above.

While we used key arguments of sociological institutionalism to theoretically substantiate why CBC schemes adopt core governance norms of the RO to which they are linked, we omitted the 'decoupling' argument, that is, the assumption that organizations emulating front-runners often create gaps between formal structures that are ceremonially adopted and actual organizational practices (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Following an organizational model does not necessarily imply 'de-coupling,' especially if the norm adopting entity operates in a culturally similar context. This is the case for CBC both in Europe as well as in Southeast Asia with respect to core governance norms.

The treaties member countries of the EU and ASEAN concluded to organize regional integration permit us to derive a set of core governance norms which can be distinguished along five dimensions and – in line with our theoretical argument – can also be applied to CBC: ontology, mode of integration, hierarchy, participation/accountability and formality. *Ontology* refers to the issue whether governance is more influenced by ideational or material properties. The location on this continuum reflects whether a CBC scheme is more driven by ideas, that is, a certain vision of governance or whether its major objective is the realization of economic growth, a developmental agenda or even geopolitical interests. *Mode of integration* denotes a supranational or an intergovernmental type of regional integration. It informs about the level of community building to which CBC seeks to contribute – regional or national. *Hierarchy* denotes the prevalence of bottom-up or top-down processes in CBC governance. It indicates the level of ownership in a CBC, the popular awareness of the scheme and also the governance capacities of the

local governments involved. *Participation/accountability* covers a continuum between participation and state-control. It specifies whether a CBC scheme is inclusive or exclusive, that is, to what extent it allows the public to participate in decision-making and to subject authorities to a modicum of accountability. Finally, *formality* denotes the level of legalization of a CBC scheme. CBC can be either formal or informal, thereby circumventing official policies.

In Europe, governance norms can be derived from the European Treaties and EU key documents such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), the White Paper on Governance (2001) and the White Paper on Multilevel Governance (2009). Based on these documents we expect cross-border regionalism in the EU to be guided by strong ideational precepts (ontology), supranational tendencies, which are balanced by the subsidiarity norm (mode of integration), a set of liberal political norms, which relish bottom-up processes of policymaking (hierarchy) and people's participation (participation/accountability) and institutional formality (formality). By contrast, ASEAN governance norms have been enshrined in documents such as the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and the ASEAN Charter of 2008. As Southeast Asian CBC is driven by the overarching goal of late development, ASEAN's governance norms tend to be more material (ontology), intergovernmental and sovereignty based (mode of integration), more top-down than bottom-up (hierarchy), more state-controlled than participatory (participation/accountability) and more informal than formal (formality).

Enlargements increase the complexity of the process of norm adoption by CBC schemes from the respective RO. The absorption of new members is unproblematic as long as, in ASEAN's case, they strongly identify themselves with the grouping's deeply entrenched set of governance norms. It may be more disruptive where – like in the EU's eastern enlargement – post-communist countries with very different histories and political cultures than the founding members join. Diffusion theory inspired by a more recent generation of sociological institutionalism, Acharya's theory of 'constitutive localization' (Acharya 2004), provides a way out of this explanatory predicament. According to Acharya, localization denotes a process by which an actor proactively fuses historically grounded local norms with new external norms and prunes those norm components which localizers regard as detrimental to the fusion's fit (Acharya 2004). This is precisely what happened in the EU's eastern enlargement. Eastern accession states associating positive returns with the extant norm of national sovereignty, a norm strongly nurtured after the collapse of the Eastern bloc, fused it with the new norms and institutional arrangements embodied in the EU's *acquis communautaire*. Localization was thus the result of a strong adherence to the extant norm of (restored) national sovereignty and the (coercive) accession conditionality of adopting the *acquis communautaire*, which is crucial to gain access to EU resources and to secure legitimacy. However, fusing old and new norms and pruning what is considered detrimental to the fusion's fit means that the new EU norms and institutional arrangements including CBC remained selective and partial. The CBC schemes created under these conditions thus deviated from those that evolved in the western sphere of Europe. In line with these theoretical premises, we expect CBC governance norms in Europe and Southeast Asia to be structured by the five dimensions outlined in the taxonomy below (Table 1).

The fact that the great majority of CBC is located in Europe and existing studies tend to be case based, gives existing research on CBC a Eurocentric flavor,

Table 1. A taxonomy of cross-border regions in Europe and Southeast Asia.

Dimension	Western Europe: Inclusive Bottom-Up CBC	Eastern Europe: Moderately Inclusive Top-Down CBC	Southeast Asia: Exclusive Top-Down CBC
Ontology	Ideational and material	Material and ideational	Material
Mode of integration	Supranationality tamed by subsidiarity	Maintaining national sovereignty despite supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
Hierarchy	Bottom-up	Partial bottom-up, controlled by national governments	Top-down
Participation/ accountability	Moderately participatory	Moderately participatory	State-controlled
Formality	More formal than informal	Formal and informal	Formal and informal

Source: Authors.

a problem with which regionalism studies generally struggle (De Lombaerde et al. 2010). In our own research, we thus seek to widen the analytical lens, moving towards a Global International Relations discipline (Acharya 2014). This entails analyzing CBC as a phenomenon that can also be observed and studied in non-Western regions such as Southeast Asia, although it is known there under different technical terms. Comparison across regional boundaries is a strength of the methodological toolset provided by the Comparative Area Studies (CAS) approach. CAS marries the theoretical and methodological strengths of disciplinary research with the empirical insights gained from context-sensitive Area Studies (Ahram, Köllner, and Sil 2018). Facilitating this approach is the fact that each of the authors of this article is a specialist for one of the two world regions studied. One of the methodological tools of CAS is grounding comparison on family resemblances (Huotari and Rüländ 2014, 437). This means that the phenomena compared fit the overall definition given for them,⁹ but may differ in one or more attributes (Collier and Mahon 1993).¹⁰ This avoids concept stretching (Sartori 1970), but allows to ‘achieve broader knowledge though analyzing a wider range of cases’ (Collier and Mahon 1993, 846). Moreover, the cases selected – Europe and Southeast Asia – also match Gerring’s category of diverse cases, a case selection method standing for a high level of representativeness (Gerring 2007, 100). Our empirical analysis rests on 24 mostly digital expert interviews, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, conducted between May 2022 and November 2023. We interviewed EU and ASEAN officials, representatives of funding organizations, executives of CBC lobbying organizations, managers of CBC schemes, politicians, businesspeople and scholars. Both authors also drew from data gathered during frequent previous on-site field visits for other projects. Newspaper databases including LexisNexis, official documents, statistics and published literature served as additional sources of information.

Governance norms and cross-border cooperation in Europe and Southeast Asia

As previously shown, CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia is exposed to different regional contexts. We argue that difference also prevails when we examine the normative dimension of CBC’s institutional fabric in both regions. In this section, we thus seek to provide evidence for our theoretical claim that CBC schemes in Europe

and Southeast Asia carry the normative DNA of the RO to which they are directly or indirectly linked: the EU and ASEAN. In the following, we discuss key norms shaping CBC governance in the two regions along the five dimensions outlined in the theory section.

Ontology: ideational versus material

A comparison of CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia suggests that European CBC schemes have a stronger ideational grounding than their Southeast Asian counterparts. Documents highlight the peace- and trust-building nature of CBC and the significance it has for the ideal of a borderless Europe (Nadalutti 2020). CBC is in this view a crucial avenue for overcoming ‘mutual animosities and prejudices between peoples of border regions which result from historical heritage’ (Böhm and Drápela 2017; Otocan 2010). The idea of peace, a founding norm of the EU, the Bavarian state government’s Europe Report stresses, is ‘lived by many cross-border projects.’¹¹ The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), an apex organization of border regions, sees CBC schemes becoming ‘meeting places for citizens who consolidate the European project every day, making it more diverse, tolerant and solidary.’¹² Euroregions represent, as the Dutch-German Euregio professes, a ‘Europe *en miniature*,’ developing a common sense of identity across borders and bringing the more abstract European ideas to the concrete lives of citizens.¹³ The subsidiarity norm and calls for citizen participation can likewise be found in documents on CBC. Local and regional authorities are portrayed as important stakeholders in building European democracy¹⁴ and an integrated Europe, especially in periods of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ Another important norm highlighted by many European CBC schemes since the 1990s is sustainability,¹⁶ adopting the EU’s self-styled global vanguard role in climate policy as currently epitomized by references to the EU’s Green Deal.¹⁷

Yet it would be wrong to disregard that European CBC also pursues material objectives. Such more material motives include the economic development of peripheral regions, the equalization of living standards within and between EU member countries, the improvement of public services and access to EU funding (Gualini 2003, 44). The material view of CBC is stronger in Eastern Europe where local governments close to borders regard it as a welcome opportunity to supplement their meagre budgets through European funding, upgrade their capacities and strengthen functional autonomy.

For Southeast Asian GTs, normative statements depicting CBC as a promoter of liberal values and free movement in a borderless region are non-existent. This is hardly surprising as there is no evidence that ASEAN emulates European-style CBC. It seems to have taken much greater inspiration from the evolving Greater China growth triangle grouped around the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.¹⁸ Moreover, due to ASEAN’s great political diversity, the grouping’s leaders deliberately avoid reference to liberal norms.

Yet, similar to the EU, peace and peaceful conflict resolution are key ASEAN norms as well. The peace norm also appears frequently in CBC documents or is highlighted by CBC actors and analysts.¹⁹ Sustainability entered the discourse on CBC much later than in Europe, but it is now also omnipresent in Southeast Asia.

In Southeast Asia, much in line with the repository of the region’s cooperation norms, the ASEAN Way, CBC in the form of GTs and growth corridors is built on lean

institutionalization, reflecting ASEAN's penchant for pragmatic, informal and flexible decision-making. Growth triangles thus primarily follow material rationales: economic transformation into higher value-added production in the case of Singapore (Parsonage 1992, 307), economic growth and hinterland development through infrastructure and connectivity projects in the cases of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines (Dent and Richter 2011) and – prior to the creation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) – a substitute for regional economic integration (Bridges 1997, 73). The formation of GTs has also been a response to the threatened marginalization of Southeast Asia under the impact of globalization, regional bloc building and the seemingly faltering multilateral trade negotiations of the General Agreement of Tariff and Trade's (GATT) Uruguay Round (Low 1996, 8). More recently, CBC has even been instrumentalized for geopolitical purposes. Former Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha regards CBC as a hedging facility in the intensifying great power competition between the US and China in the region,²⁰ Vietnam as a device to balance China's growing influence in Cambodia and Laos (Chheang 2018).

Mode of integration: supranational versus intergovernmental

A hallmark of the EU is its selective supranationalism. This implies that in certain policy fields nation states transfer sovereignty to a higher, here regional, level of decision-making (Haas 1958). In the EU, the most important supranational policy fields include trade, competition policy and monetary policy in the Eurozone countries. Over the years, the EU has also markedly deepened its authority in many other policy fields at the expense of its member states (Rittberger 2022, 184).

Supranational tendencies, albeit tamed by the subsidiarity norm, are also visible in European CBC. A case in point is the formation of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in 1994, an EU-level advocate for local and regional governments and a vocal promoter of CBC. Likewise, the European Commission established an important funding source for fostering territorial cooperation known as Interreg, which since the early 1990s has become a key tool in the Union's cohesion policies. In 2006, the Commission created the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which gives cross-border regions a supranational legal personality (Evrard 2016; Ulrich 2020) and strengthens their autonomy regarding the central state (Nadalutti 2013). Apex organizations of cross-border regions also stand for (bottom-up) supranational tendencies. The AEBR, formed in 1971, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), created in 1997, and the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI), established in 2009, have become effective lobbyists, awareness raisers and capacity builders for CBC.

Although CBC proliferated in Eastern European accession states in the 1990s and many of these CBC schemes emulated established Western European models such as the Upper Rhine Conference and the cooperation arrangements along the Dutch-German border (Perkmann 2003, 167), their differing historical legacies shaped the way they localized the EU's *acquis communautaire*. For many Eastern European countries, their decades-long dependence as former satellites of the Soviet Union was traumatic. It was thus unsurprising that CBC critics particularly targeted the supranationality norm for pruning from the adopted EU norms.²¹ In several Eastern European countries, apprehensions abounded that CBC would erode the national sovereignty that was only fully restored after the

implosion of the Soviet empire. For instance, Slovakia and Romania, home to sizeable Hungarian minorities, suspected CBC of being a Hungarian ploy to pursue irredentist policies as a remedy for the country's Trianon trauma (J. W. Scott and Hajdu 2022, 14). But also in the Polish city of Szczecin, civil society representatives raised concerns that the envisaged establishment of the Euroregion Pomerania would open the floodgates for an economically powerful Germany to win dominating influence over large parts of western Poland.²² Further to the east, in the city of Przemysl, local politicians anticipated a loss of national and cultural identity. They thus opposed participation in the Carpathian Euroregion,²³ launched to facilitate cooperation between Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian and Hungarian border regions.²⁴ The organizational structure of most Eastern European CBC schemes also reflect concern with national sovereignty. Unlike many Western European CBC arrangements, each CBC partner maintains its own 'euroregional' organizational arrangement.²⁵

Pivotal in ASEAN's repository of cooperation norms, the ASEAN Way, is a strong emphasis on sovereignty norms as outlined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) (Haacke 2003). While the ASEAN Charter on paper somewhat relaxed the sovereignty norm, in the daily routine of cooperation it retained its overriding dominance. Reforms deepening ASEAN integration thus categorically rule out trends towards supra-nationality (Rüländ 2017).

Commensurate with the overriding significance of sovereignty norms, CBC in Southeast Asia is largely intergovernmental. Unlike the EU in European CBC, ASEAN as an RO has virtually no active role in the GTs and economic corridors. In the case of IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA, the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) has observer status in the triangles' meetings, in the case of IMS-GT and the economic corridors not even that.²⁶ Only IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA have developed skeletal secretarial structures which, like ASEC, mainly perform technical and coordinative functions.²⁷ IMS-GT lacks common overarching institutions altogether. Most of the triangles' CBC activities rest on bilateral, not trilateral, agreements (Parsonage 1992, 311). As a legacy of past turbulent inter-state relations, distrust lingered over the triangles which took years to formalize through government agreements. A key impediment here was suspicion about the unequal distribution of the triangles' benefits (Bridges 1997, 65). Moreover, most evident in IMS-GT, but also in the IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA, there is – apart from complementation – substantial competition between their members (Phelps 2004, 349, 351–353; Thambipillai 1998, 256). Also, institutions integrated into ASEAN's organizational set-up acting as advocates of CBC or apex organizations of border regions are absent. In sum, it appears that CBC is a device to primarily strengthen ASEAN's member countries. IMS-GT, for instance, is no longer relevant for the Singaporean economy due to changing geo-economic circumstances²⁸; a reason for the triangle's decay.²⁹ This motivation of prioritizing national (economic) interest is much in line with the rationale of regional cooperation in ASEAN as a whole. It also explains, as we shall see in the next sub-section, the strong control the national governments exert over CBC schemes.

Hierarchy: bottom-up versus top-down

While the EU's founding documents, the Treaties of Rome (1957), have been silent on bottom-up policy making, the role of lower tiers of government in the process of

regional integration has been a perennial issue of debate from the very beginning. Central in these debates was the subsidiarity norm. Subsidiarity means that governance functions which are not exclusively vested in supranational or national bodies should be performed at the local and regional levels of the member states as long as their effective delivery is secured. Although federalists and intergovernmentalists differed in the significance they attached to subsidiarity, all member states of the European Community were liberal democracies and accorded varying scopes of autonomy to their subnational governmental entities.

Unsurprisingly, in this normative context, early Western European CBC schemes originated locally. In 1963, local businesspeople and academics formed an association called Regio Basiliensis in the Swiss city of Basel, which became the nucleus of the subsequent Upper Rhine Conference connecting the northern parts of Switzerland, the French Alsace and parts of the German state of Baden-Württemberg. In 1975 the national governments of the three countries formalized the CBC with the Bonn Treaty, amended by the Basel Agreement of 2000. Also, the cross-border arrangements that emerged in the 1950s to 1970s along the Dutch-German border (Euregio, Regio Rhine-Waal, Euregio Maas-Rhine, border region Rhine-Maas North); the ARGE-ALP cooperation covering alpine regions of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy; and the International Lake Constance Conference, had local or regional roots and included private sector organizations. While, as the case of SaarLorLux and the Strasbourg-Kehl/Ortenau Eurodistrict suggests (Wassenberg 2018, 383), not all CBC schemes originated locally, there is a bottom-up trend in the schemes founded in the 1960s to 1980s (De Sousa 2013, 676; Gualini 2003, 44; Nadalutti 2012, 182).

The subnational dimension of European integration and CBC became even stronger when in 1992 the subsidiarity norm was incorporated into the Treaty of the European Union. Subsidiarity was regarded as crucial for the emergence of a 'Europe of the Regions,' epitomized in the formation of the Committee of the Regions. Subsidiarity is further reflected by the fact that many cross-border activities, after 1990 including those financed by the Interreg program, are also mostly sub-nationally conceptualized (Blatter 2002, 261). Likewise, emblematic for the bottom-up organization of CBC in many parts of Europe is the emergence of several peak organizations, which – like the Committee of the Regions (CoR) – have become key lobbying and networking vehicles for cross-border regions. The AEBR, for instance, was pivotal in the Council of Europe's (CoE) enactment in 1980 of the Convention on 'Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities.' The convention, also known as the Madrid Convention, can thus be viewed as a recognition by central governments of a *fait accompli* that was driven by local initiatives (Nadalutti 2013).

The subsidiarity norm has also been appropriated by Eastern European CBC schemes, albeit more hesitantly and much less vigorously than in the western parts of the continent. After decades of centralization, local governments entered the post-communist era in a state of weakness. Even decentralization after the transition to democracy could not decisively strengthen sub-national government, which was underfinanced and lacked autonomous socio-political and political competences (Roman-Kamphaus 2020, 168). While Interreg programs improved this situation and widened the scope of local governments to propose and implement projects in some parts of Eastern Europe,³⁰ Hungarian local governments underwent a process of re-centralization under the Orban regime, spurring the decay of CBC schemes with Hungarian participation.³¹

Given the weakness of local governments, it is unsurprising that their impact on the formation of CBC schemes in Eastern Europe has been much less tangible than in Western Europe. It is true that individual citizens, local governments and business organizations lent support to their creation. Yet protracted negotiations between high-level central government representatives worried about the erosion of national sovereignty preceded the cooperation agreements eventually signed by the foreign ministers. The Slovak government even annulled the participation of local governments in the Carpathian and Tatra Euroregions. Slovak sub-national governments could only accede to Euroregions after the electoral defeat of Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar's nationalist government in 1998.³²

However, with the migration crisis of 2015 and especially the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a re-bordering process took place in all parts of Europe, relegating open borders to a subordinate priority. Panicking national governments unilaterally enacted emergency measures based on alleged national self-interest which, in effect, turned out to be versions of 'beggar thy neighbor' policies. Neighbors were not consulted when borders were closed for weeks, adversely affecting cross-border commuters, relegating CBC to the digital domain and in a lack of solidarity even temporarily stopping the export of badly needed health equipment.³³ Prejudices against neighbors arose, generating suspicions about who was spreading infection (Böhm 2021, 137).³⁴ If there was any positive side of this 'Covid-fencing' (Medeiros et al. 2021), it was the intensive lobbying of national governments by CBC schemes, the Committee of the Regions and apex organizations such as AEBR, MOT and CESC to mitigate and eventually repeal (often ineffective) emergency measures (Weber 2022).³⁵ CBC schemes were also pivotal in disseminating essential information in the confusing array of quickly changing border regulations and documenting obstacles to CBC. Moreover, CBC apex organizations launched the European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance and strongly supported Commission initiatives including b-solutions and the currently stagnant European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) to strengthen CBC and to better prepare it for shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without the subsidiarity norm, national governments dominate institutional arrangements to facilitate CBC in Southeast Asia. Proposals for CBC originated in all cases at the highest level of government. All of the triangles required lengthy negotiations between the central governments involving the countries' leaders before they were formally institutionalized after several years (Low 1996; Xu 2019, 2). While Sijori and, subsequently, IMS-GT mainly operate on the basis of bilateral government agreements, IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA have built up skeletal organizational infrastructures, which are heavily dominated by central governments through annual summits, ministerial and senior officials' meetings (Anuar 2023; Raharjo 2023). Central government dominance also prevails as – apart from economic development – security linked to irregular migration, transnational organized crime and insurgencies has also become a major concern in Southeast Asian CBC.³⁶ In 2004, 2006 and 2009, respectively, IMT-GT, BIMP-EAGA and GMS also launched regular Chief Ministers and Governors Fora which, however, have only consultative and transmission belt functions for the implementation of the polygons and their economic corridors.³⁷

Even decentralization in Southeast Asia only marginally strengthened local governments, as they often lack the capacity to develop socially and environmentally sustainable

projects (Hill and Menon 2020, 11).³⁸ Projects proposed for inclusion in the triangles' and growth corridors' road maps and work plans mostly originate from national governments or external donors such as the ADB, Japan and the Islamic Development Bank. National governments also make the decisions on the projects. Their determination to maintain their autonomy in decision-making is further corroborated by IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA's weak secretarial structures, making the ADB their *de facto* secretariat.³⁹

Unlike in the EU's Interreg projects, in Southeast Asia national governments allocate external project funds provided by international organizations such as the ADB. Where border regions participate in a CBC project, funding must be channeled through the finance ministries of each of the participating countries.⁴⁰ The same holds true for cross-border economic corridors in the GMS, IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA. Southeast Asian CBC is thus guided more by national than by regional or local interests (Xu 2019, 7).

Like in Europe, CBC in Southeast suffered much during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses resembled those in Europe. In the beginning, emergency measures lacked any regional coordination and were exclusively driven by national governments. Like in Europe, they included border closures, which lasted longer, until mid-2022, severely affected the mobility of migrant workers and cross-border commuters, and also entailed temporary export bans for essential medical goods (Rüland 2021, 11). Less affected were economic transactions and supply chains. Yet, unlike in Europe, CBC schemes did not lobby to re-open borders. If at all, this was done by individual local governments on each side of the border, which targeted their respective national government for action,⁴¹ albeit with negligible effect. Thus, except for economic transactions, CBC came to a virtual standstill, in particular in connectivity and infrastructure projects.⁴²

Participation/accountability: participatory versus state-controlled

CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia also resembles the participatory patterns observable in the EU and ASEAN. EU key documents such as the European Treaty strongly emphasize democratic processes of decision-making including the significance of parliamentary representation and civil society participation as a means to secure accountability in regional policymaking. At the same time, the democratic quality of EU decision-making is heavily contested in the literature. While some take the EU to task for what they consider an ongoing 'democratic deficit,' others defend the grouping as the most democratic RO on the planet. However, it is clear that by any standard, the EU's democratic quality is lower than that of most of its member states.

European CBC amply reflects this ambiguity. If we examine CBC documents, we also find references to norms such as 'democracy' and 'citizen participation,' albeit less frequently than expected.⁴³ While it is relatively uncontested that due to the subsidiarity norm the participatory scope of regional and local governments in EU affairs has widened and local governments in border regions have benefitted from this trend, the verdict on CBC's legislative structure and civil society participation is markedly different.

Similar to the EU at large, a varying level of civil society participation exists in CBC schemes. Yet legislative bodies are largely absent. We could only identify three – in the Upper Rhine Conference, in the Grande Region (SaarLorLux) and in the Euregio Maas Rhine. They were confined to consultative functions. None of them had legislative powers (Harz and Caesar 2022, 54). Most decision-making bodies in CBC thus have a strong

executive bias. They are almost entirely composed of local chief executives including mayors, county heads, prefects and other high-ranking local officials. Accountability is thus quite circumscribed.

Participatory levels are on average lower in Eastern Europe than in the continent's western parts. While we could not identify a single legislative body, there are cases where at least civil society participation is noteworthy. An example is the Viadrina Euroregion at the German-Polish border.⁴⁴ Lower participatory levels in Eastern Europe must likewise be attributed to the lower trust levels diagnosed above. Borders between Western and Eastern Europe demarcate erstwhile hostile geopolitical spheres that can be traced back as far as the interwar period and World War II, especially with a view to Germany's eastern borders.⁴⁵ The scars of history are proverbial and tangible (Paasi 2009).

In Southeast Asia, as predicted by our theoretical concept, participatory patterns resemble ASEAN's policymaking processes. Hence executive domination is even greater and is – as the previous sub-section suggests – top-heavy due to the ubiquitous role of central governments. Parliaments – often subjected to strong media and public bashing in the region – are largely absent from CBC. Where they occasionally come into play such as in CLV-DTA, they are confined to the national parliaments and transmission belt functions.⁴⁶ Civil society participation is limited to less than vibrant business fora. Very much coinciding with the developmental state approach (Johnson 1982), which Southeast Asian countries emulate to varying degrees (Kurlantzick 2016; Phelps 2004, 357), the private sector is merely a junior partner of governments. It serves as a quasi-corporatist transmission belt for state policies, an implementing arm of government policies and the mobilization of investment. While private sector participation in CBC was strong in IMS-GT,⁴⁷ it was less effective in the case of IMT-GT, BIMP-EAGA and many economic corridors. However, beyond the business sector, civil society participation is almost non-existent in the GTs. One of the few exceptions is the IMT-GT's university network, which seems to operate successfully in the area of student and staff mobility, but less as a source of expertise for CBC.⁴⁸ More recently, feeble attempts are underway to increase the semblance of more representative participation through greater involvement of local governments in CBC. So far, however, the impact of these Chief Ministers and Governors Fora measures is limited. Accountability is comparatively low.

Formality: formal versus informal

European integration is often portrayed as legalistic and formalistic. The late Malaysian businessman-cum-scholar Noordin Sopiee, distinguishing the European approach with regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, saw it driven by a 'legalistic Cartesian impulse.' The latter denotes an attitude 'to negotiate, negotiate, negotiate to wring concessions and to impose legalistic commitments, especially on weaker negotiating partners' (Sopiee 2004). Indeed, even if this may be an overly pointed description, it is true that European regional cooperation advances following intense negotiations from which the legal framework for community building eventually emanates. By contrast, in Southeast Asia, agreements in the form of treaties are rare and usually only codify previously established informal practices. In other words, while European integration rests on 'hard law,' Southeast Asian regionalism prefers non-binding and less precise 'soft law.'

Especially in Western Europe, CBC development reflects the desire to formalize cooperation. Yet at the beginning of CBC schemes, legal asymmetries and incompatible bureaucratic cultures impeded legalization. CBC was thus primarily the result of informal interaction among local authorities, the business sector and, to a lesser extent, civil society (Weber 2022). As CBC progressed, an often unwieldy organizational structure emerged that complicated CBC, in particular as cross-border governance bodies usually did not interact (Harz and Caesar 2022, 54). To mitigate confusion, some Western European CBC schemes such as the Upper Rhine Cooperation or the Grande Region gradually underwent processes of rationalization, professionalization and, hence, legalization (Peyrony et al. 2022, 195). National government agreements such as the Bonn Treaty (1975), the Basel Agreement (2000) and the Aachen Treaty (2019) provided the legal framework, complemented by regional initiatives such as the Madrid Convention (1980) or the EU's EGTC legislation (2006). Deliberate nesting contributed to this 'de-complexification' of CBC schemes (Peyrony et al. 2022, 199).

However, even among the Western European CBC schemes, there was no uniform organizational development. The International Lake Constance Conference, for example, continued to operate largely informally (Zumbusch and Scherer 2015, 513). Institutional informality is characterized by a high degree of horizontal, vertical and lateral networking (Peyrony et al. 2022, 192), forming what Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) called 'soft spaces.' It is a type of project-based cooperation with variable boundaries and a high degree of overlapping and duplicating governance structures (Zumbusch and Scherer 2015, 509). Also in Eastern Europe, this informal type of CBC is widespread due to the frequent national compartmentalization of cross-border institutional arrangements.

CBC in Southeast Asia is organized more uniformly than in Europe. As argued above, it has been a more top-down than bottom-up process, with local governments mainly relegated to consultative and implementing functions. Yet this does not mean that local governments always comply with this hierarchical process, especially when economic elites have deviating interests as Karim's (2019) insightful, counterintuitive research findings suggest. His analysis illustrates how in Indonesia's Riau Province local authorities circumvent central directions by informally colluding with cross-border private sector actors, processes to which the center eventually acquiesces.⁴⁹ While central-local conflict over CBC may primarily occur in decentralized and federalized polities such as Indonesia and Malaysia, and to a lesser extent the Philippines, our own interviews suggest that informal processes of cross-border interaction may create some space for local government action even in mainland Southeast Asia's highly centralized political systems.⁵⁰ Also, the fact that a substantial part of the region's economy is informal and informal businesses tend to evade public regulation such as in BIMP-EAGA, creates obstacles for government-driven CBC.⁵¹ Unfortunately, however, there is so far little empirical research analyzing these processes.

Conclusion

Our empirical analysis has provided evidence for our theoretical argument that ROs extend their cooperation norms to sub-regional institutions formed under their aegis. This accounts for the different institutional designs of CBC in Europe and Southeast Asia. As posited in Table 1, we can thus observe a continuum of CBC types ranging from

normatively rich schemes in Western Europe to pragmatic, primarily development and security-oriented CBC in Southeast Asia. Due to their localization of the European *acquis communautaire*, Eastern European CBC schemes are somewhere in between. Especially in the EU founding countries, CBC adopts supranational, or at least supraregional, traits, albeit resolutely balanced by the subsidiarity norm. It is also characterized by bottom-up processes of governance, liberal participatory norms which, however, are compromised by the absence of parliamentary local-regional bodies, and legalization. In Eastern Europe, in line with different historical legacies shaped by four decades of communist rule, reservation exists towards supranational and subregional tendencies. National sovereignty is here considered a significant factor in CBC. Moreover, due to weak governance capacities the decay rate of CBC is markedly higher than in Western Europe (Kaucic and Sohn 2022).

In Southeast Asia, CBC is a supportive vehicle in the process of late development and thus more material and pragmatic. Much in line with the cooperation norms defined by the ASEAN Way, it is a top-down process dominated by national governments, strictly intergovernmental and much more a device for strengthening the resilience of member states than one fostering regional cohesion, although this is an explicitly stated side-effect. Unlike Europe, cross-border bodies in Southeast Asia have not developed peak organizations lobbying for them and creating awareness about CBC such as the AEBR, MOT, CESC and the CoR. The concept of 'varieties of regionalism' thus also extends to micro-regional cross-border schemes.

While from a liberal viewpoint the Western European type of CBC appears attractive, it is much less clear which type is more successful in terms of goal achievement. Measuring economic growth rates in CBC is methodologically demanding and many analysts doubt that its effects can be adequately measured.⁵² While it seems certain that in the first decade of its existence, the Southeast Asian IMS-GT achieved many of its ambitious economic objectives and that infrastructure development in the GMS economic corridors is progressing, economic growth rates for IMT-GT, BIMP-EAGA and their economic corridors are less persuasive (Aggarwal 2022). Moreover, in other criteria such as social and environmental sustainability (Nguitrageol and Varkkey 2022, 413) or cross-border identity building, Southeast Asian CBC trails Europe. In the European case, economic growth rates are substantially lower, whereas cross-border public service delivery and cognitive factors such as cross-border identity have to be valued higher. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how fragile these non-material gains are. Developing more measurable criteria and variables for assessing the material and immaterial effects of CBC is thus a major task ahead for research on CBC and contributions of this research field towards a Global International Relations discipline.

Notes

1. Derived from Perkmann (2003).
2. *Aachener Nachrichten*, 4 August 2018.
3. See Council of Europe, List of Euroregions, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20070210065542/http://www.coe.int/t/E/Legal_Affairs/Local_and_Regional_Democracy/Areas_of_Work/Transfrontier_Co-operation/Euroregions/List_of_Euroregions.asp#TopOfPage, (accessed 12 June 2022). Other counts are even higher.

4. Also CLV-DTA will no longer qualify as CBC if the scheme expands to all the territories of the three countries as agreed at the CLV-DTA summit held in November. *ASEAN Post*, 14 November 2022.
5. Interview, 6 June 2022.
6. Consisting of two North-South corridors, the East-West and two Southern Economic Corridors (Hill and Menon 2020, 9). Six economic corridors exist in IMT-GT and two in BIMP-EAGA. See <https://imtgt.org/economic-corridor/> and <https://bimp-eaga.asia/about-bimp-eaga/economic-corridors>, (accessed 9 April 2023).
7. Interview, 21 June 2022.
8. Interview, 14 November 2023.
9. Such as Perkmann's (2003), definition of CBC.
10. As illustrated in the description of CBC schemes in both regions in the previous section.
11. Europabericht, Vertretung des Freistaates Bayern bei der Europäischen Union in Brüssel, Nr. 12/2022, 1 July 2022, available at: <https://www.bayern.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EB-12-2022.pdf>, (accessed 21 August 2022).
12. Association of European Border Regions, Vision and Mission, available at: <https://www.aebr.eu/vision-and-mission/>, (accessed 18 August 2022).
13. See Euregio homepage, available at: <https://www.euregio.eu/de/was-wir-tun/nachhaltige-raumentwicklung/>, (accessed 22 August 2022).
14. Committee of the Regions, *Mission Statement*, available at: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed 12 October 2022); *Medienservice Sachsen*, 20 June 2022.
15. See, *inter alia*, European Committee of the Regions (2021), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021XR2499>, (accessed 18 August 2022), *Council of Europe*, Cross-border Cooperation, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/transfrontier-cooperation>, (accessed 18 August 2022); *Declaration of the European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance Cross-Border Regions at the Heart of Tomorrow's Europe*, available at: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Documents/Declaration/English-declaration.pdf>, (accessed 18 August 2022).
16. See *Baltic News Service*, 7 October 2021; *L'Independent*, 11 November 2021. The European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance
17. Declaration of the European Cross-border Citizens Alliance, COR-2020 -04018-00-01-TDC-TRA.
18. *The Nikkei Weekly*, 20 September 1993.
19. Among many statements, see *Business Times*, 24 September 1993; *The Nation*, 25 November 2016 and *Thai News Service*, 2 April 2018.
20. Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 May 2018, 'The 11th Indonesia – Malaysia – Thailand Growth Triangle Summit.' Available at: <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/5d5bd12e15e39c3060023878?page=5d5bd3cb15e39c306002a9ac&menu=5d5bd3cb15e39c306002a9ae>, (accessed 23 July 2023).
21. *PAP News Wire*, 13 January 1993.
22. *PAP News Wire*, 28 November 1992.
23. *PAP News Wire*, 16 February 1993.
24. *PAP News Wire*, 16 February 1993; *Polish News Bulletin*, 28 March 1994.
25. Interview, 23 September 2022.
26. Interview, 27 May 2022.
27. Interview, 27 May 2022 and 14 November 2023.
28. Interview, 2 June 2022.
29. Interview, 27 May 2022.
30. *Bayerische Gemeindezeitung*, 31 January 2019; interview, 20 June 2022.
31. Interview, 23 September 2022.
32. Fears of foreign domination were not confined to Eastern Europe. Adverse historical legacies, Euro-skepticism and perceived power asymmetries also drove Danish nationalists to resist the creation of the Danish-German Euroregion Schleswig. See *The European*, 15 May 1997. Interview, 10 October 2023.

33. Germany was one of the countries that temporarily stopped the export of masks and other health equipment.
34. Cases include negative attitudes of Germans to commuters from France, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic. *Luxemburger Wort*, 17 June 2020.
35. Interviews, 13 June 2022, 6 October 2022.
36. Interview, 23 August 2023.
37. *BusinessWorld*, 8 November 2006.
38. Interview, 6 June 2022.
39. Interview, 6 June 2022.
40. Interview, 6 June 2022.
41. Interview, 6 June 2022; 23 August 2023.
42. Interview, 6 June 2022.
43. Interview, 6 June 2022.
44. Interview, 13 September 2022.
45. Interview, 13 September 2023.
46. *Voice of Vietnam*, 10 April 2023.
47. Interview, 6 June 2022.
48. Interview, 2 November 2022.
49. Interview, 6 October 2022.
50. Interviews, 6 June 2022, 29 September 2022.
51. Interview information, 23 August 2023.
52. Interview, 2 June 2022.

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