



WORKSHOP TITLE

**Initiatives of Regional Integration in Asia in Comparative Perspective:
Concepts, Contents and Prospects**

WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

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The workshop aims to explore the *past, present and future role of formal initiatives of regional economic integration*. As in other parts of the world, “regionalisation” is since the beginning of the 1990s flourishing again in Asia and its major sub-regions (*East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia and the Middle East*). Most of the countries concerned form part of a steadily growing network of *regional integration agreements* (RIAs) on the bilateral or multilateral level.

In contrast to the *first regionalism* wave in the 1960s, however, most of the RIAs concluded during the current new or *second* wave of *regionalism* are designed in a framework of *open regionalism*, increasingly include so-called *deeper integration issues* and are to a substantial magnitude signed between countries at a different stage of development and / or economic size. In addition, many agreements are no more limited to purely economic aspects or security cooperation but integrate a whole range of different economic, political and security issues in one RIA. Accordingly, there is a growing body of literature assuming that formal regional integration, if designed appropriately, could contribute to liberalisation of trade and investment in line with (and not against) the multilateral process in the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Moreover, RIAs might even be able to foster efforts at democratisation. Finally, regions, or better regional and sub-regional organizations leading the process of regionalisation are increasingly viewed as being or trying to become important political actors in the international arena. The numerous new initiatives, however, differ considerably in *scope, content, membership and outcome* from one RIA to another, from one regional or sub-regional organization to another and even between the different sub-regions of Asia. These differences are the core aspect to be investigated in this workshop. Could these variations be traced back primarily to different *concepts* and / or *specific contents* of RIAs or to other *preconditions* frequently stipulated in the literature – or what the Middle East might learn from, for example, South-East Asian initiatives of regional integration? What are the prospects of RIAs *connecting* countries belonging to different Asian sub-regions in addition to countries outside the region like the most recent initiatives fostered by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)?

Papers are invited which are dealing with one or more of the following issues of regional integration covering *both theoretical and empirical contributions*:

- New methodological and/or innovative theoretical conceptualizations regarding the causes and effects of bilateral/multilateral RIAs in general;
- Comparing preconditions for successful integration among RIAs in Asia / its major sub-regions;
- Comparing concepts underlying the design of inter- and intra-Asian RIAs, their membership and their specific contents (rules of origin, dispute settlement procedures);
- Measurement of differences in outcomes of RIAs in Asia / its major sub-regions in different policy areas (liberalization of trade, investment, development, political and security cooperation etc.);
- Role of external and/or regional powers (i.e. USA, Japan, EU, China) in promoting or hindering regional integration among Asian countries;
- Case studies of bilateral and multilateral RIAs in Asia and their institutional interplay with global economic institutions, i.e. WTO, IMF, World Bank.