Bibliographic Information: Christopher Changwe Nshimbi. 2015. "Networks of Cross-border Non-State Actors: The Role of Social Capital in Regional Integration," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 30:4, 537-560

Theme/Main Point/Purpose: This article examines the contribution and impact that networks of non-state actors have on regional integration. It seeks to determine whether larger networks of people bound by common histories, background, and culture augment regional integration. The author highlights three major assumptions that it will use to demonstrate this impact. It assumes that networks of grassroots non-state actors connect communities that share common background, histories, and cultures. Interactions in the networks foster trust and therefore stabilize relationships and networks efficiency. Further, it assumes that where these networks straddle state boundaries, they integrate the economies that host the communities of actors in the networks and thus enhance integration. Meaning, where these non-state groups interact across state boundaries, it creates long term community and economic ties that aides in integration into the region or area.

Supporting Arguments/Evidence: This article looks to multi regional economic communities in both Asian Pacific and Southern Africa as zones in which economic interest extends beyond a single nation-state border, but a larger sub-region. In Southeast Asia, the author notes that despite geopolitical divisions, Southeast Asia remains economically integrated due to similar economic interests. The article discusses the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore growth triangle, which are economic and trade based partnerships that enhance regional influence and investment opportunities. In the discussion of growth triangles, the article states that where these economic regions have closeness of proximity, localized cooperation occurs that leads to greater cooperation in policymaking arenas. Similarly, when looking at Southern Africa, they reference the Zambia–Malawi–Mozambique Growth Triangle, which is aided by commonalities of language, history, and culture. This has led to stable interactions between these three countries over time.

Conclusions/Discussion: The article states that economic growth triangles have been proven as effective mechanisms for regional integration where other efforts have not. Therefore, the author concludes that they should be looked at in more detail.

Implications: Understanding the underlying economic sub-regional mechanisms that can be used to better understand how regional cooperation can and is developed gives a deeper understanding into how it could be implemented in other communities and regions that have not developed as strong economic ties. Areas where geopolitical conflicts are present, common economic interests could be looked as a means for greater regional cooperation.

Discussion Questions:

- Understanding regional economic cooperative pacts, does this enhance or hinder efforts of globalization? Are regional economic communities a mechanism of McWorld or Jihad wherein the larger economic community pushes a region to the periphery?

- Can we consider an economic arrangement such as the European Union as similar economic community and as we see divisions manifesting, could we expect similar patterns in both SE Asian and Southern African RECs?