Chapter 6

Integration in West Africa: The institutional landscape

Focussing on the institutions operating in West Africa, Chapter 6 examines the diversity of organisations involved in regional integration[1]. Analyses of cross-border co-operation networks are performed at both the macro level, covering the 15 countries of ECOWAS as well as Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania, and in three specific micro-regions that share resources. The chapter also highlights the formal and informal relationships that exist between institutions, what structural constraints limit their exchanges of information, what the impact of national borders is on the regional construction process, and how these factors, amongst others, have contributed to the differing levels of regional integration evident across West Africa.

Key messages

- Institutions promoting regional integration in West Africa have traditionally focused on building economic communities, environmental protection and water management, while a number of bilateral and national commissions also exist to support co-operation.
- Regional integration in West Africa is often most successful when institutions target very specific challenges, are strongly supported by their member states and donors, and bring together countries that share the same currency.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND OTHER REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

More than 50 years have passed since the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was created in Addis Ababa. Over this half century, numerous national, supranational, and international organisations have been created to foster integration between newly independent African states. However, despite the many charters signed, progress towards effective regional integration has been slow. Thus far, inter-state agreements that should ensure the free movement of goods have had little effect on business operators, contributing to Africa being one of the most expensive regions in the world to do business (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009). On a continent divided into 54 independent states, regional integration also suffers from an incomplete elimination of tariff barriers, lack of coherence between development frameworks and divergent macroeconomic policies; three factors that tend to increase the negative impact of market fragmentation (ECA, 2004; World Bank, 2012). The mobility of people within and between regional blocs is another area in which regional integration has been disappointing, often due to a lack of political will but also as a result of systemic constraints.

Between 1967 and 1998, the African continent saw the creation of numerous regional economic blocs. In the years following the Abuja Treaty of 1991, eight of these blocs were officially recognised as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) by the African Union (AU) (Table 6.1). Despite their common label, RECs are quite diverse in size, pursue different goals and have achieved various degrees of integration.

Free trade areas such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) were established to further reduce trade barriers. Customs unions, such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), add another layer of integration by introducing a common tariff on the external borders of the regional bloc. Common markets further extend free trade areas by allowing services, capital and labour to circulate freely across countries, while customs and monetary unions guarantee common external trade tariffs and a single currency. For example, a common external tariff (CET) has existed throughout the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since January 2015, building on the basis of the West African Economic and Monetary Union's (UEMOA) CET. In Africa, customs and monetary unions are subsets of larger regional bodies: eight ECOWAS members form the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and share the West African CFA franc (XOF), while six countries from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) form the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and use the Central African CFA franc (XAF).

The implementation of targeted initiatives designed to promote cross-border co-operation varies greatly between the two RECs that are mainly active in West Africa: ECOWAS and CEN-SAD. Within ECOWAS, cross-border issues are recognised as a fundamental dimension of the regional integration process. In 2005, ECOWAS adopted the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) - now the Cross-Border Co-operation Programme (CBCP) - which aims to accelerate the regional integration process by increasing the number of locally initiated cross-border projects. The CBCP was initially based on four pilot projects co-ordinated by field operators working for many years in border development. These are the Municipal Development Partnership (PDM) of the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo zone; Enda Diapol for southern Senegambia; the Group for Rural Development Research and Projects (GRDR) for the Karakoro Basin; and the group formed by Fewsnet, the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Co-operation (NNJC) and the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC/OECD) for the Kano-Katsina-Maradi zone. These initiatives led

Table 6.1
Regional Economic Communities

Name	Date of creation	Headquarters
East African Community (EAC)	1967, dissolved 1977, re-established 2000	Arusha, Tanzania
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	1975, revised 1993	Abuja, Nigeria
Southern African Development Community (SADC)	1980 as SADCC, 1992 as SADC	Gaborone, Botswana
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	1983	Libreville, Gabon
Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD)	1986	Djibouti City, Djibouti
Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)	1989	Rabat, Morocco
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	1993	Lusaka, Zambia
Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	1998	Tripoli, Libya

to the establishment of the West African Borders and Integration Network (WABI), which aims to promote local initiatives for cross-border co-operation through state-supported political advocacy, dialogue between business operators and institutions, the exchange of southern and northern experiences, and the strong commitment of local populations. Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, officially support these pilot operations.

These initiatives have the backing of regional institutions and, in particular, ECOWAS, for which the free movement of goods and persons is acknowledged as a fundamental right for the inhabitants of member states who may travel without a visa and choose where to live and work within the community in accordance with national legislations. The application of the protocol adopted in 1979 on the free movement of persons, residence and establishment within the ECOWAS area, as well as other legislation, remains nevertheless difficult to enact. These difficulties are evident in the delays that have been experienced in the establishment of a common passport and in the implementation of the right of residence and establishment, phase two and three of the protocol, respectively. The establishment of ECOWAS' free trade area has also suffered from similar issues, and trade restrictive measures have been maintained by many countries. In terms of cross-border development, significant weaknesses exist in the implementation and financing of projects such as the suitability of legislation and obtaining appropriate levels of funding. The subsidiarity principle, which allows cross-border co-operation to be implemented at the relevant level, still remains insufficiently developed.

Within CEN-SAD, cross-border initiatives are less developed. Created in Tripoli in 1998 at the initiative of Muammar Gaddafi, it aims to remove barriers to the free movement of people and goods, to improve road transport infrastructure and to develop sectoral programmes. Economic policies for CEN-SAD have been developed for transport and communications infrastructures, mining, energy, the social sector, agriculture, the environment, water and animal welfare. Given worsening security conditions in the Sahel-Saharan zone, priority is now placed on the implementation of a joint mechanism for dispute settlement. The revision of the treaty in 2013 refocused the organisation's missions on co-operation activities to foster peace, security and sustainable development, and on the fight against desertification and measures to adapt to climate change. CEN-SAD faces numerous political and economic challenges. Its operations are significantly affected by the Libya crisis and the fall of Muammar Gaddafi who provided a large portion of its funding, and the development of its customs union suffers from the overlapping presence of other unions such as ECOWAS.

In addition to the eight organisations officially recognised as RECs by the AU, other supranational organisations play an important role in West African regional integration. This is the case for UEMOA, which introduced cross-border issues into its strategy for regional integration and land development through the *Politique d'aménagement du territoire communautaire* (PATC/UEMOA). Phase four of this initiative focuses on the development of community solidarity and the strengthening of social cohesion, provisioning for the implementation of cross-border and inter-communal co-operation programmes. Their aim is to support, strengthen and encourage decentralisation and local development through the adoption of legal frameworks that facilitate decentralised co-operation. The Council of Local Governments (CCT) was created by the Commission in 2011. Partnerships were also put in place for the implementation of the first phase (2014–18) of a specific Programme for Local Cross-Border Co-operation (PCTL) managed by the CCT. UEMOA is collaborating with the United Nations Capital Development Fund's (UNCDF) Local Cross-Border Initiative (LOBI, 2012–17) alongside ECOWAS, which also has the support of the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Phase one covers Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger through the implementation of two pilot areas: Sikasso, Korhogo and Bobo Dioulasso (SKBo) and IIR Sahel around Dori, in the north of Burkina Faso.

In 2014, UEMOA joined forces with the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (ECA), with support from the German Agency for International Co-operation (GIZ), to encourage economic development in cross-border areas and experience-sharing between regional organisations. Funding of projects such as the LOBI and the PCTL could be carried out through structural funds managed by local authorities. A subsidy mechanism is also planned to enable easier access to loans from the West African Development Bank (BOAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID). However, despite these advances, co-ordination between UEMOA and ECOWAS remains insufficient for the harmonisation of legislation on cross-border co-operation, and the application of the subsidiarity principle remains difficult on several levels. Difficulties also exist between the states and local authorities as central governments are responsible for the vast majority of public spending. Access to funding remains an issue despite the opportunities offered by decentralised co-operation funds and the role of the Council of Local Authorities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND WATER MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

In addition to RECs and large regional bodies, a number of regional groupings in Africa are focussed on sectorial co-operation issues. In southern Africa, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, the Zambezi River Authority, and the Komati Basin Water Authority are primarily concerned with water resources development within the perimeter of the main continental river basins. In West Africa, the Senegal River Basin Development Organisation (OMVS), the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Mano River Union (MRU), and the Gambia River Basin Development Organisation (OMVG) pursue similar objectives. Other organisations aim at covering a broader range of activities, including agriculture, infrastructure, fisheries and natural resources. These organisations include the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), which was created during the Great Western African drought to promote food security and fight against desertification. Other examples include the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), created to improve land and water management, preserve ecosystems and promote peace building and security; and the Kagera Basin Organisation, which aims to reduce poverty and improve socio-economic development in the Great Lakes region. Environmental issues have also motivated the creation of the Integrated Development Authority of the Liptako-Gourma region (ALG), which brings together three landlocked Sahelian countries with similar problems of land degradation and access to water supply.

The following subsections discuss the origins, functioning and current challenges of these regional bodies, focussing particularly on those working in the three micro-regions considered in this study: OMVS, ALG, and the LCBC (Map 6.1).

Senegal River Basin Development Authority

OMVS, headquartered in Dakar, was created in 1972 between, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, and was joined by Guinea in 2006. From an institutional perspective, the High Commission of OMVS is the only administrative structure that is common to these riparian zones. Its role focuses on economic policy co-ordination in the Senegal valley and monitoring the effects of hydrological facilities on the environment.

The OMVS programme covers five of the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) ten priority sectors: agriculture, the environment, energy, infra-structure and health. It also draws on the Senegal River Water Charter (2002), a legal instrument with international reach which completes the existing legal framework. The strategic orientation of the OMVS was adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2003. The Authority receives support from a wide range of partners including the different agencies belonging to the United Nations and other international and African organisations (the Global Environment Facility [GEF], *Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel* [OSS], the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], CILSS), ECOWAS and UEMOA, numerous African and international universities and research centres, as well as

Map 6.1

Regional organisations of the Senegal River, Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad

co-operation from GIZ, the French Agency for Development (AFD), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Senegal River valley remains beset by institutional, economic and environmental weaknesses including the fragility of the institutional, legal and technical framework governing the basin; the ability of water resource development activities to generate revenue; the degree of exploitation of hydroelectric potential; and the steady deterioration of water management infrastructure (dams and canals). Before the commissioning of the Manantali hydroelectric power plant in 2001, dams had already significantly altered the environmental conditions in the Senegal River valley. Flow regulation in the river is undermining the traditional economy of the local populations, especially pastoral activities and fishing in a zone with serious land issues, despite the resolution of the 1989 Senegal-Mauritania conflict. Lastly, the prevalent rate of waterborne diseases, such as bilharzia, malaria and Rift Valley fever, is high in the basin.

Integrated Development Authority of the Liptako-Gourma Region

The ALG is a multinational institution created in 1970. Its headquarters are located in Ouagadougou and its members are Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Its strategic focus is on a small number of areas of regional importance including mineral resources, energy, water power and agriculture. As the Liptako-Gourma region is semi-arid, the aim of the ALG's programmes is to promote food security and access to regional markets, to reduce the impact of desertification, to open up the region and protect the environment.

The various technical and financial partners contribute to the institutional strengthening of the Authority through a new action plan (2010–15), supported by the AfDB. The ALG's activities comply with the objectives formulated by NEPAD, as well as the Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) for West Africa prepared jointly by ECOWAS and UEMOA, Mali's PRSP, Burkina Faso's Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development, and Niger's Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) (ALG, 2015).

Financially, the ALG has focused over 60% of its expenditure over the last 40 years on initiatives in the transport and telecommunications sectors (ALG, 2010). For example, it has launched a programme to open up the region using financing from the BOAD. Feasibility studies backed by the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) are currently under way for the modernisation of the Bandiagara-Burkina Faso border road and the Ouahigouya-Mali border road.

As part of UEMOA community solidarity, a programme for integrated development is planned in the Union's disadvantaged cross-border areas. Six cross-border zones (two of which are in the ALG area: Burkina Faso-Mali and Mali-Niger) will benefit from improved roads, infrastructure and socio-economic and cultural facilities; with stronger production, storage and marketing capacity and support. ECOWAS's Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) includes a pastoral component which is expected to underpin future ALG initiatives, helping it to address the lack of appropriation of its projects by the populations in the Liptako-Gourma region.

As with other organisations, the ALG's aim is to address the lack of co-ordination resulting from a multitude of sustainable land and water resource management initiatives, including the Great Green Wall project (2010–15), the NBA's agricultural development and climate change adaptation programme, and the CILSS project to provide better climate information to help support climate change adaptation in West Africa. To do this, the ALG has formulated an action plan for the reconstruction process of northern Mali (2013), in which it states its intention to position itself "as an instrument of enhanced co-operation for the implementation of the 'border country' approach between the three countries and between transnational initiatives" (ALG, 2013: 9). The Authority tries to revive projects which are waiting for funding, have been put on hold or require consolidation as a result of the economic crisis; and to resume feasibility studies for projects which have received declarations of interest from technical and financial partners. The action plan lays out proposals for a cross-border programme to conserve croplands and restore degraded land as part of a policy of climate change adaptation. This action plan could be associated with the Regional Economic Programme (REP) and the NBA's investment programme, which notably provides support for the management of cross-border transhumance.

Lake Chad Basin Commission

The LCBC is the oldest river basin organisation in Africa. Created in 1964 and extended in 1996, its headquarters are located in N'Djamena and it currently has six members: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger and Nigeria (Sudan and Egypt hold observer status). The LCBC seeks to promote integrated and sustainable management of the Lake Chad waters and other transboundary water resources, promote economic integration and regional co-operation, and reinforce peace and regional security. It works in areas affected by severe demographic constraints: the population density around the lake is high (over 60 people/km²) with over three million inhabitants from four neighbouring countries living off the resources and derived services provided by Lake Chad (INBO, 2012). In addition, the extremely variable climate affects seasonal fish and agricultural production and increases tension and conflict over the area and its resources.

The LCBC is a stakeholder in the Programme for Strengthening the Institutions for Transboundary Water Resources Management in Africa (SITWA) financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented since 2011 by the Global Water Partnership (GWP). It is also active in several environmental networks such as the African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO), and the Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, through the launch of the Chad Wetlands Initiative (CHADWET) in 2003.

Since its creation in the 1960s, the LCBC has been confronted with many institutional challenges, including insufficient co-ordination at the national and regional levels, the very precarious economic situation of some of its members and sometimes unequal involvement in regional initiatives. The reorganisation carried out in 2009–10 still remains inadequate and weakened by the development of new activities. However, with regard to access to funding, it should be noted that in 2010 the LCBC started working on a strategy for more sustainable use of its financial resources, mainly through subregional funding levers. In April 2015, the Council of Ministers also approved the implementation of draft reforms designed to improve the efficiency and expertise of the LCBC.

Gambia River Basin Development Organisation

The OMVG, founded in 1978 by Gambia and Senegal (later joined by Guinea and Guinea-Bissau), encourages a switch from traditional flood recession farming to an industrial agricultural economy boosted by hydroelectric dams. In addition to the Gambia River basin, it also covers two adjacent basins, Kayanga-Geba and Koliba-Corubal. Following the example of the OMVS, the OMVG aims to promote the economic and social integration of its members by improving water access and quality, hydroelectric power, flood control, food security and infrastructure. However, it is confronted with failing water management systems and insufficient access to quality infrastructure, loans, new technologies and expertise, storage and processing capacities, and marketing. In addition to these constraints, political obstacles hinder the proper movement of trade, especially to and from Senegal. The Regional Transport and Transit Facilitation Project run by ECOWAS and UEMOA may create opportunities for the OMVG by removing non-tariff barriers and reducing the cost of transportation for goods and people.

Mano River Union

Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are members of the MRU (created in 1973) whose headquarters are in Freetown. Its mission is to enhance regional integration to promote not only peace and security, but also trade, industry, energy, infrastructure and agriculture. Particularly in the area of security, a tripartite mechanism (MRU, ECOWAS and the United Nations Office for West Africa [UNOWAS]) oversees the cross-border security strategy. The implementation of joint borders posts is now financed. The MRU wishes to create a customs union with its own nomenclature and harmonised taxes, within a relatively small market where regional integration remains limited. The 2014 MRU Summit of Heads of State reaffirmed the need for institutional strengthening of the secretariat and for more effective co-operation with ECOWAS in order to encourage consistency between the ECOWAS framework for peace and security and the MRU's cross-border security strategy. Despite these investments, the Union faces persistent challenges due mainly to institutional and security issues. The stability of the zone remains fragile due to the circulation of arms and the presence of criminal gangs. The closure of the borders as a result of the Ebola outbreak in 2013 also weakened the Union, which is soon expected to launch a post-Ebola recovery project with AfDB funding.

Niger Basin Authority

The NBA is particularly active in cross-border hydroelectric development projects. It operates in the Niger River basin between Mali and Niger; in the Gada-Goulbi, Kamadougou-Yobe, and Maggia-Lamido bassins; in the Tagwai-el Fadama basin between Niger and Nigeria; and in the Mekrou basin between Niger and Benin. Border development initiatives are organised within the framework of the Niger Basin Water Resources Development and Sustainable Ecosystems Management project and the Reversing Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Niger River Basin project. The NBA seeks to address the water infrastructure deficit within a socio-economic context marked by high rates of poverty and a food security situation which is heavily reliant on rainfall and variations in the level of the Niger River. In 2004, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the NBA resulted in the formulation of a shared vision for the development of the basin (SDAP for 2015), a revitalised role for the Authority, and the implementation of a new framework agreement for co-operation between the NBA and 22 technical partners.

Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel

The CILSS was created in 1973 by Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The organisation is now comprised of 13 members including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal and Togo, in addition to the aforementioned countries. In 2004, it integrated cross-border co-operation into the scope of its activities. CILSS comprises an executive secretariat in Ouagadougou; the *Institut du Sahel* (INSAH) in Bamako, which focuses on agro-socio-economic research; and the Regional Agrometeorological and Hydrological Centre (AGRHYMET) based in Niamey.

CILSS supports the development and implementation of sectoral policies, notably those relative to food security and the fight against desertification. It also co-ordinates the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) alongside the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) and is responsible for a food security monitoring system designed to forecast harvests, consolidate food balances sheets, monitor prices and markets, identify famine risk areas and provide more general information on measures to deal with different annual scenarios.

Its activities range from research to the implementation of national projects in various areas such as agriculture, property, transhumance, livestock markets and continental fishing. One of the main issues faced by CILSS is related to the spatial and temporal uncertainty which characterises the Sahel. Helping countries to adopt strategies on agricultural adaptation and market simplification are major challenges. Other challenges include co-ordination with other regional organisations and the development of complementarities between regional policies and national institutional frameworks.

BILATERAL AND NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

Many joint commissions exist at the bilateral level, including those between Mali and Algeria, Mali and Niger, Niger and Algeria, Niger and Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, and Chad and Algeria.

Founded in 1971, with its headquarters in Niamey, the NNJC is the only general permanent joint commission between Niger and Nigeria. The NNJC is involved in a wide range of areas including the rehabilitation of border markers, the creation of a Niger-Nigerian consular chamber, border patrol, border communication networks, the fight against trafficking and management of the Niger River. There are specific agreements regarding desertification and conservation of trans-boundary watersheds that were agreed in Abuja and Maiduguri in 1990, the latter being amended in 1998. In terms of cross-border programs, NNJC is particularly involved in the Kano-Katsina-Maradi triangle (K²M) with support from the World Bank, and is also promoting three new trade corridors between the two countries, between Kebbi-Sokoto-Zamfara and Dosso-Tahoua, Jigawa-Daura and Magaria-Zinder, and Borno-Yobe and Diffa.

The Commission is also involved in the Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Areas between Nigeria and Niger, a project of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that is designed to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks to encourage more participatory management of natural resources. The NNJC's activities also cover trade, health and security. The borders are patrolled by joint units and the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries has been achieved.

The main challenges faced by the NNJC concern security, desertification and water needs. Joint patrols and the presence of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) – comprising soldiers from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) have managed to prevent some attacks by Boko Haram. The increase in cross-border security initiatives may limit the number of enforced border closures during states of emergency, as was the case in the states of Yobe and Borno in 2012 and 2013. The situation had serious repercussions on the economy, on agricultural trade with neighbouring countries, and on prices levels in the Diffa region of southern Niger and in the north of Nigeria (Maiduguri).

Cross-border co-operation between Niger and Nigeria is even more important given that Niger uses Nigerian ports to ship a large proportion of its exports. Nigeria is committed to retaining a route to the sea for landlocked countries, as demonstrated by an NNJC initiative for the free movement of goods in transit which resulted in the creation of a trade mission for port concession holders and terminal operators. The aim of the mission is to raise the awareness of Nigerian economic actors and to develop trade within a tense security situation.

Because of its leading role in the regional economy, Nigeria is highly concerned by cross-border issues and created the National Boundary Commission (NBC) in 1988 in Abuja. Considered to be a ground-breaking African boundary commission, the NBC works directly under the Presidency of the Federal Republic. The Commission protects the integrity of the common borders and oversees the work of five joint commissions. Since the redefinition of its prerogatives in 2006, the NBC has extended its reach, especially with regard to transboundary development. One of the Commission's main challenges is to remedy problems related to the settlement of boundary disputes, which were previously the responsibility of various ad hoc commissions with no co-ordination mechanism. During the first ten years of its existence, the Commission focused on settling border disputes with neighbouring countries, notably Benin, Cameroon, Niger and the LCBC, before its powers were enhanced following the adoption of the NBC Act in 2006. The NBC may now intervene in the peaceful settlement of boundary disputes, not only with neighbouring countries but also within the Federal Republic when arbitration is required. Accordingly, for the last ten years, the Commission has focused primarily on the settlement of boundary disputes between the federal states, local governments and communities, with over ten successful settlements, notably the disputes between the states of Jigawa/Kano, Kaduna/Kano, Kaduna/Katsina, and Kaduna/Plateau. The NBC's expertise and its ability to co-ordinate the settlement of boundary disputes have given it greater legitimacy. In September 2015, faced with new challenges to cross-border security and the movement of people, the vice president reiterated the need to solve problems related to the co-ordination and coherence of NBC interventions and national agencies such as the Nigerian customs and immigration services. Other challenges to overcome include those related to financing or to the destruction of border markers.

UNEVEN OUTCOMES?

Generally speaking, regional integration in Africa is most successful when institutions target very specific areas, are strongly supported by their member states and donors, and bring together countries that share the same currency. For example, by relying on sectoral co-operation between largely francophone countries, CILSS has addressed some of the most urgent needs of Sahelian countries, including food security and natural resource management. The success of SACU and the CFA Franc Zone organisations also illustrate that a high level of regional integration can be achieved between countries where formal arrangements existed before decolonisation. These successes cannot obscure the fact that progress towards regional integration has been rather unequal (AU/AfDB/UNECA, 2016) and limited since the 1960s (Aryeetey, 2001; AU, 2009, 2013a; ECA/AU/AfDB, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). This is particularly evident when comparing the objectives of the Abuja Treaty with its current achievements.

Entered into force in 1994, the Abuja Treaty envisioned the gradual establishment of the African Economic Community in six stages by 2034, at the latest. The first stage which took place from 1994 to 1999, sought to establish economic communities in regions where they do not exist, and was completed with a few exceptions. The second stage, between 1999 and 2007, aimed to remove intra-regional barriers within RECs and harmonise customs duties in relation to third states, has recorded some progress but is not yet completed. The third stage, from 2007 to 2017, in which each regional economic community should establish a free trade area and a customs union, is far from being achieved, however. The next stages of regional integration should ultimately lead to a pan-African economic and monetary union, central bank and currency, but the extent to which these levels of integration can and will be achieved is unclear.

Regional organisations have also contributed to increased intra-regional trade, albeit marginally. Trade between countries in sub-Saharan Africa represented approximately 12% of official total trade flows in the region in 2015 (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2015), but this share is well below the levels of other regions in the world, where intra-regional trade can represent up to 66% of total trade, as in Europe. Indeed, in some parts of the continent, as in southern Africa, infra-regional trade is actually declining and only represented 15% of total trade in 2008 against 22% in 2002 (Mbekeani, 2013), giving rise to calls for additional effort to strengthen regional integration. However, these official statistics vastly underestimate the real size of inter-African trade given the large informal cross-border trade flows. If these informal flows were incorporated into official figures the share of intra-regional trade in sub-Saharan Africa would be substantially re-evaluated. According to recent estimates, unrecorded cross-border trade could represent from 30–40% of total trade for SADC to more than 75% for countries including Benin and Uganda (UNCTAD, 2013). Making a comparison with other continents, the real proportion of intra-African trade is probably similar to that observed in Latin America and the Caribbean (20%).

One of the most frequently cited criticisms regarding the state of regional integration in Africa, concerns the gap between how regional policies are designed by supranational bodies and the concrete application of these policies on the ground. Most regional bodies have thus far struggled to enforce the implementation of the agreements signed between states and to translate them into forces for structural change across African regions and countries. In other words, there is a mismatch between regionalism as it should be and regionalisation as it is experienced on a daily basis. It would be misleading, however, to attribute the disappointing outcomes and slow process of regional integration in Africa to the supranational organisations alone. Nation states and private actors also share part of the responsibility for the lack of practical implementation of integration policies on the continent.

Many countries have had little incentive to engage effectively in deeper institutional integration with their neighbours. In a patrimonial system that nurtures interpersonal relations across society and the state, regional initiatives often go against the very interests of the state and its clients in the private sector for which borders are a resource rather than a constraint. Bach's comment formulated more than 15 years ago that "trans-state integration is stimulated by market distortion, not trade liberalisation" (1999: 13; see Bach 2016) is still true today, despite some progress. In Nigeria, for example, the persistence of informal trade, the partial liberalisation of the market and reform customs have less to do with the protection of national industries than with the profits generated by the illegal re-export trade (Raballand and Mjekiqi, 2010; Golub, 2012). In Benin, the existence of national border differentials has long been a guarantee of state and private revenues because most of what is imported from the world markets is ultimately destined to be sold informally to neighbouring countries (Hoffmann and Melly, 2015).

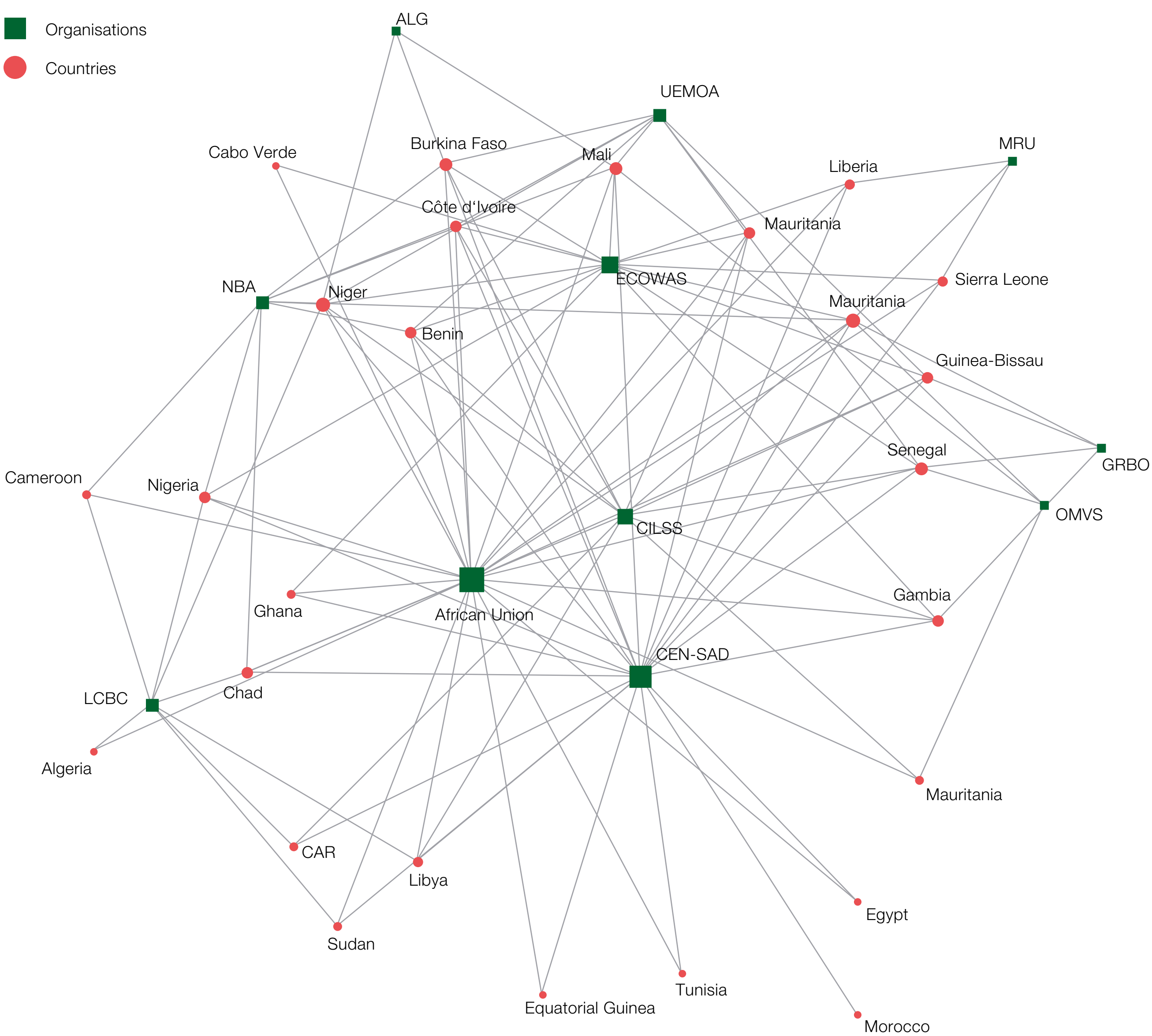
Regional integration has also been constrained by the large number of organisations that exist with similar or competing purposes. The majority of African states belong to multiple regional groupings, which often have high co-ordination costs, competition between policies, and confusion among international donors (Dirar, 2010; Hartzenberg, 2011). In West Africa, some programmes pursued by ECOWAS and UEMOA coexist with a myriad of functionally oriented regional groupings such as the ALG or the OMVS. In east and southern Africa, overlapping affiliations between COMESA, SADC, SACU and EAC are also particularly numerous.

Co-memberships are particularly apparent when mapping which organisations each country belongs to. This can be represented in a two-mode network visualisation which identifies countries, represented as red circles, and the organisations they belong to, represented as green squares, as illustrated in Figure 6.1.

The analysis builds upon the assumption that belonging to the same regional grouping is an indicator of relationships between state representatives, who can use events and programmes elaborated within each organisation to establish or develop joint activities. This shows that the 18 countries of West Africa considered by this report (ECOWAS plus Mauritania, Cameroun and Chad) are connected by 11 different regional organisations[2]. The network is rather compact and dense with approximately 40% of the possible ties between countries and organisations present in the graph, confirming that co-membership is a widespread practice in the region. The density of ties is particularly high between Francophone West African countries that often belong to several large regional organisations such as ECOWAS and UEMOA and to sectorial, organisations such as the ALG, the Niger Basin Organisation or the OMVS. The size of the nodes is proportional to the number of ties they have, a measure known as degree centrality that provides information about the respective importance of each country and organisation. Niger is the most central country in the region in terms of co-memberships,

Figure 6.1

Network visualisation of membership to regional organisations



followed by other Francophone countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. Apart from the AU, to whom all African countries belong except Morocco, CEN-SAD, ECOWAS and CILSS occupy the most central place in the region.

Overlapping memberships and the importance of summitry are also reminders that African regional groupings have been key arenas for conducting international relations since the 1960s, a pattern which mirrors the significance of interpersonal relationships in the conduct of politics and policies. Rather than being seen as redundant, the proliferation of regional institutions with overlapping responsibilities is seen by many African leaders as an opportunity for consolidating state power (Herbst, 2007). The efficiency of regional groupings heavily depends on the state of interpersonal relations between heads of state who often act "as individuals rather than as representatives of a political system" (Bossuyt, 2015: 53). The pre-eminence of interpersonal relations over intergovernmental relations has also been prone to the development of paradiplomacy at the global level. This structure has been used by political elites to promote national interests within international financial institutions, with the EU and other international donors. However, this also contributes to institutional paralysis whenever decisions have to be made, not least with respect to the establishment of customs unions and the harmonisation of incompatible common external tariffs (CETs) (AfDB, 2014: 15).

Regional integration has also been greatly affected by political crises and conflicts. While the number of global conflicts has declined since the end of the Cold War, Africa has experienced an increase in political violence since the 1990s, as many one-party leaders suddenly lost their external support. As a consequence, several regional organisations ceased their activities more or less permanently. The Economic Community of Great Lake Countries (CEPGL), for example, was suspended in 1996 due to the First Congo War and only re-activated in 2010. The MRU experienced a long period of inactivity resulting from the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone before its reactivation in 2004. More recently, IGAD's progress toward regional integration in Eastern Africa has been slowed down by conflicts in Somalia and Sudan. In the northern part of the continent, regional integration in the AMU is slowed by the enduring hostility between Morocco and Algeria related to the status of Western Sahara. The activities of CEN-SAD, originally financed by petrodollars was also brought to a halt by the Libyan crisis since 2011.

NOTES \\\

1 *The list of organisations mentioned is based on the answers of respondents.*

2 *The network diagram includes the eight North and Central African countries which also belong to these organisations.*

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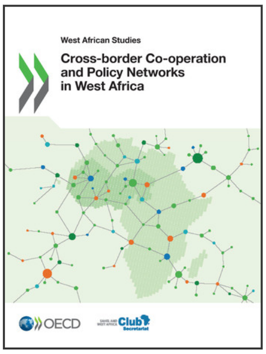

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