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ULB – Public Seminar – May 2 2012

The European Union and the Regionalization of the World

Globalization can be defined as the integration between economies across the world that result in the growth of flows and increasing interdependencies. In the global economy, (large) cities play a major role by connecting actors through complex global networks within and between cities and by playing an interface role between the global and regional/national/continental economies.

However, globalization should not be understood as undirected interconnections of territories – and in particular cities – across the world. Global flows are first spatially structured by the persistence of unequal relations between core regions, which still benefit from cumulative processes of accumulation, and peripheral regions. Global flows are also deeply structured by intense interrelations within macro-regions. In all types of flows, distance plays an essential role in the intensity of these relations: trade, migrations, flows of students or air connections. It results in an intermediate level of organization notably from the economic point of view: we call these **macro-regions**. Nevertheless, the importance of distance in structuring human and economic flows should not be understood as a pure geographical distance effect as this also relates to strong historical links, that public as well as private actors have established, and that distance helps to keep alive. Moreover, the process of regionalization is also a policy-driven process through what might be called ‘regionalism’, or politically driven integration at a macro-regional scale. Most of these regional agreements have mainly focused on economic relations, and especially on free trade agreements. Hence, the intensity of economic relations between countries belonging to the same macro-region has been strongly boosted by political decisions in terms of the free circulation of goods and capital.

By far, the European Union appears as the most advanced territorial assemblage in this process of *regionalism*, notably because its economic integration has been accompanied by a unique process of political integration. The EU is thus highly integrated from both economic and institutional perspectives. It is also a major player in regionalization beyond its boundaries, maintaining with its neighbours strong functional relationships which it tries to better regulate while disseminating its political preferences. Furthermore, the EU develops relationships with other macro-regional systems.

Within the ESPON programme framework (TIGER research project - Territorial Impact of Globalization for Europe and its Regions), this seminar will be devoted to the regionalization of the world. Experts from several disciplines and institutional actors will present the place and the role of the European Union in the regionalization of the world from different perspectives. The EU will be at the heart of the debate, but other world regions will be considered as well in order to allow comparisons with other major areas.

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Invited speakers

Morning session

9.15 am, Indermit Gill, World Bank

World Development Report: Regionalism and the World Bank.

10 am, Barbara Delcourt, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Institut d'Etudes Européennes

Between normative universalism and regionalist positions. The example of EU in multilateral fora

11 am, Catherine de Wenden, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Sciences-Po, Paris

The regionalization of regional migratory systems in the world

11.45 am, Gilles Van Hamme, Université Libre de Bruxelles

The EU in the regionalization of the world trade

Afternoon session

2.15 pm, Yann Richard, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

EU's external political co-operations: a regionalist approach?

3 pm, Aurélie Bros, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Does EU energy security involve regionalization?

4 pm, Saturnino Munoz Gomez, European External Action Service

The EU neighbourhood policy and its latest developments

The Seminar will be held on **2 May 2012, from 9 to 12 am and from 2.15 to 5 pm** at the premises of the Institute of European Studies of the Free University of Brussels (Spaak hall, ground floor).

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Each presentation (25 mn) will be followed by a debate in French and English.
You are kindly invited to attend this public seminar.

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