Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamic development of transnational sub-regional cooperation in the East Asia Pacific and its relation to the East Asian integration process. It is generally agreed that regional integration has become an irresistible global trend. Nevertheless, while regionalism has succeeded in establishing the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement, no theory is yet profound enough to promote an effective cooperation mechanism in the East Asia Pacific. In respond to that, this empirical thesis is dedicated to exploring the problems and prospects that help explain why East Asian integration is different from other regions, as well as whether or not transnational sub-regional cooperation, focusing on intensive economic interaction at the local level without heavy political commitment, can be an alternative path for region-building in the East Asia Pacific.

This thesis is based on case studies and the comparative methodology. A fieldwork research based on in-depth interviews was designed for further data collection. The research started by tracing out the development of contemporary integration theories including regionalisation, regionalism, new regionalism, and open regionalism; and their application in East Asia. It then evaluated the
conditions underlying the transnational sub-regional cooperation for integration.

The introduction in the first chapter lays out a basic framework for research and the main questions for analysis: what accounts for the establishment and transformation of transnational sub-regional cooperation in the East Asia Pacific? In addition to that, to what extent can transnational sub-regional cooperation contribute to regional integration in the East Asia Pacific? In order to build up a comprehensive understanding of transnational sub-regional cooperation in the East Asia Pacific, three cases were selected for further study, including the Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle, the Tumen River Area Development Programme, and the Southern China Sub-regional Economic Zone. Since the Southern China Sub-regional Economic Zone was the most prosperous project among these three cases, it was significant to conduct fieldwork research in this area to get a full picture of how micro-regionalism, a policy-driven force, interacted with micro-regionalisation, a market-led, in a sub-regional economic zone. Moreover, what was the extent of these two forces in sub-regional cooperation and their interrelations with regional integration in East Asia?

This research introduces EGPIB factors (Economic complementarity, Geographical proximity, Political commitment and Policy coordination,
Infrastructure development, and Business networks), as well as the theories used to examine the transformation of the cases. This thesis can contribute to the understanding of the establishment and the development of the transnational sub-regional cooperation in the East Asia Pacific. It contends that, firstly, economic complementarity, among five factors, is the most important determinant for forming a sub-regional economic zone. Secondly, micro-regionalisation and micro-regionalism are both important in maintaining a growing sub-regional economic zone. However, they weight differently in the course of a sub-regional cooperation project. And thirdly, a sub-regional economic zone which closely follows the flying geese pattern is more likely to grow.
Table of Contents

Abstract i
Table of Content iv
Table of Figures, Charts, Tables, Maps and Graphs vii
Acknowledgements xii
Glossary of Abbreviations xiv

Chapter One:
The Problem for Analysis

Introduction 1
The Problem for Analysis 2
The Evolution of East Asian Integration 20
Sub-regional Economic Zones in the East Asia Pacific 42
The Main Forces in a Sub-regional Economic Zone 65
The Relevance of the Study 69
The Outline of the Thesis 71

Chapter Two:
The Literature Review

Introduction 72
The Literature Review on Region-building 72
The Literature Review on East Asian Region-building 88
The Literature on Transnational Sub-regional Cooperation in the East Asia Pacific 102
The Literature Review on Micro-regionalism and Micro-regionalisation 113
Summary 119

Chapter Three:
Methodology

Introduction 121
Methodology 122
Chapter Four:
A Case Study on Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle (SIJORI)
Introduction 141
History Review 144
The Involvement of Key Actors 148
Analysis of the Case 151
Analysis on Data 159
Criticism 163
Summary 167

Chapter Five:
A Case Study on Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP)
Introduction 170
History Review 174
The Involvement of Key Actors 191
Analysis of the Case 200
Criticism 213
Analysis of the Data 235
The Clash between Micro-regionalism and Micro-regionalisation 243
Summary and Suggestion 248

Chapter Six:
A Case Study on Southern China Subregional Economic Zone (SC SREZ)
Introduction 262
History Review 266
The Involvement of Key Actors 283
Analysis of the Case 291
Summary 296
## Chapter Seven:
### A Fieldwork Research on Southern China Subregional Economic Zone (SC SREZ)

- Introduction: 299
- The Value of SC SREZ 303
- Current Formal and Informal Agreements between the SC SREZ members 330
- Spots for Interview: 332
- Micro-regionalism vs. Micro-regionalisation 336
- Achievement 363
- Summary 366

## Chapter Eight:
### Comparison and Conclusion

- Introduction 372
- The Origin of Transnational Sub-regional Cooperation. 374
- The Divergence and Similarities 376
- Who Holds the Key? 380
- Inspiration from the SREZs 387
- Conclusions for the Thesis 389

## Appendices

- Appendix 1: List of interviewees 396
- Appendix 2: Questions for pre-probe interviews 403

## Bibliography

1. Books, Articles, and Seminar Papers 414
# Table of Figures, Charts, Tables, Maps and Graphs

## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The Dynamics of the Region-building Process in East Asia Pacific.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Forces Shaping the Transnational Sub-regional Cooperation</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Economic Complementarity in SIJORI</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Diagram Showing Contemporary Economic Relationships between the Countries of Northeast Asia.</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The Economic Complementarity in TRADP</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Economic Complementarity in SC SREZ</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Which is more attractive for the following FDI attributes—China or India?</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FDI Confidence Index. Top 25, October 2004.</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>The comparison of foreign direct investment between Guangdong and other provinces in 2004</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>The comparison of gross domestic product between Guangdong and other provinces in 2007</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>The primary trade partner of Guangdong Provinces in 2004</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>The Amount of Trade and Investment between Taiwan and Mainland China (2003-2008)</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables

Table 1.1: The Three Levels of Integration Process and Examples for Wider and Deeper Cooperation, and Integration in Economics and Politics in the SC SREZ 26

Table 1.2: Different Types of Regionalism 48

Table 1.3: Transnational SREZs in the East Asia Pacific 52

Table 4.1: Gross Domestic Product in Johor, Malaysia at Constant Prices (2000 = 100), 2005 – 2007 (Year) 160

Table 4.2: Gross Regional Domestic Product at Current Market Prices In West Sumatra and Riau, Indonesia 2004 - 2008 (Million Rupiahs) 160

Table 4.3: Percentage Distribution of Gross Regional Domestic Product at Current Market Prices by Provinces, 2004-2008 (Percent) 160

Table 4.4: Indicators of Batam Economic 161
Table 7.3: The number of visitors from Taiwan to Mainland China (1988-2008) 319

Table 7.4: The number of visitors from Mainland China to Taiwan (1989-2008) 321

Table 7.5: Taiwan’s Trade to China. (1989-2005) 324

Table 7.6: Record of Significant Economic and Trade Dispute Cases Solved by SEF from 1980 to January 2009 358

Table 7.7: Record of Significant Cases Regarding Taiwan Businessmen Personal Safety (1991- January 2009) 359

Table 7.8 :The Export and Import of Guangdong Province from 2007 368

Table 7.9:The Export of Guangdong Province from 2007 369

Table: 7.10: The Import of Guangdong Province from 2007 369

Table 7.11:The Export and Import of Guangdong Province with Hong Kong and Taiwan from 2007 369

Table 7.12:The Export of Guangdong Province with Hong Kong and Taiwan from 2007 370

Table 7.13:The Import of Guangdong Province with Hong Kong and Taiwan from 2007 370

Maps

Map 4: The Location of SIJORI 146

Map 5: :The Location of Tumen River Area Development Programme 171
Map 6: The involved areas of the SC SREZ discussed in this chapter.  269

Map 7.1: The Location of SC SREZ  331

Map 7.2: The Distance between Main SC SREZ Cities in Guangdong Province  335

Graphs

Graph 7.1: The gross domestic product of Guangdong and other provinces from 2001-2007  312

Graph 7.2: Taiwan’s trade surplus to China from 2003-2008  326
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Glossary of Abbreviations

CEPA: Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement

CECA: Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Arrangement

CPG: Central People’s Government

HKSARG: Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

GT: Growth Triangle

SC: Southern China

SREZ: Sub-regional Economic Zone

SIJORI: Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle

TBA: Taiwan Businessmen Association

TBC: Taiwan Businessmen Centre

TRADP: Tumen River Area Development Project
Declaration

I declare that none of any part of this thesis has been presented before. This thesis is entirely the author’s own work. It is original and being presented to the University of York for the first time.
To My Dad Kuo-Hsiung Chen and

My Mum Chun-Mei Chiang