

## **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 response 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.

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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*