

Constructing an Identity: Understanding Differences in Gender Equality Approaches between Mercosur and the Andean Community

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1. Introduction

One of the unwritten rules of comparative regionalism is that “Identity Matters”. The construction and manifestation of regional and organizational identity by regional organizations influences integration approaches, legitimacy, and policy development. In this research I bridge the gap between research on identity construction and regional gender governance policy development to demonstrate the reflection of constructed (Regional) Organizational Identity by Latin American regional organizations through gender equality policies.

Research Question: How do gender and social governance policies reflect the differences between regional organizations that are considered to be similar in location, ideologies, and integration approaches?

2. Framework: Constructing a (Regional) Organizational Identity

Constructed (Regional) Organizational Identity

- The identity of an organization is both the collective identity of multiple actors and social actor that is formed through internal and external factors.
- Applying a constructivist approach, an organizations constructed (Regional) Organizational Identity serves as the *framework within which actors in regional organizations interact and make decisions.*
 - I argue that evidence of the influence of (Regional) Organizational Identities can be *reflected in gender and social governance policies.*

Elements of (Regional) Organizational Identity

- Governance Structure:** Establishing documents create the scope through which the organizations can function (trade/economic). Governance structure affects the reach, & support that exists for gender equality initiatives.
- Ideological Political Shifts:** Effects of the past, present, and future ideological changes in the region and the organizations. These also speak to the organizations shifting compatibility with gender equality & other social policies.
- Actors:** actors social positions and shared beliefs, form a collective identity inside the organization.
- Regional Identity:** “an interpretation of the process through which a region becomes institutionalized, a process consisting of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolism, and institutions” (Paasi, 2003: 478).
 - The construction of a regional identity is a process of POWER.
 - Limited democratic input in regional organizations leave identity construction to reflect the interests of state and regional leaders

3. Methodology

Comparative Case Study: Most similar case study based integration approach, and social and gender governance regime based on market - integration mission (Van Der Vleuten 2016)

Document Analysis: Analyzed through overarching categories and patterns that were identified inductively and deductively using qualitative document analysis. (Expert interviews for background and triangulation)

4. Cases (Mercosur & CAN)

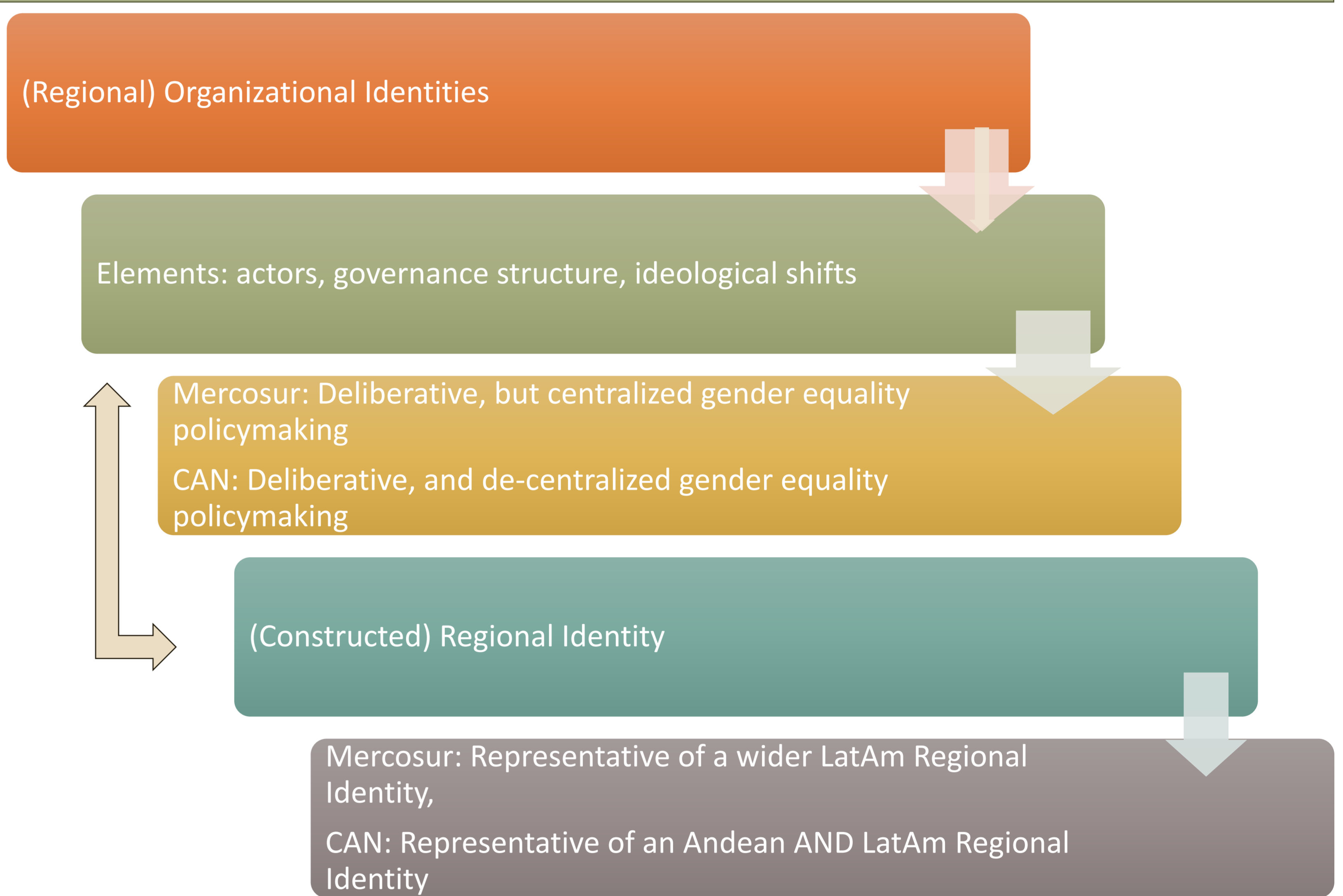
Southern Common Market (Mercosur)

- Est. 1992 | Members: Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay
- Common market with some political leanings (1992) -> more political from 2000s on
- Narrative:** “Cono Sur”, shared colonial history, Latin American integration project.
- Gender & Social Governance:** REM (1998), RAADH (2004), RMAAM (2011)

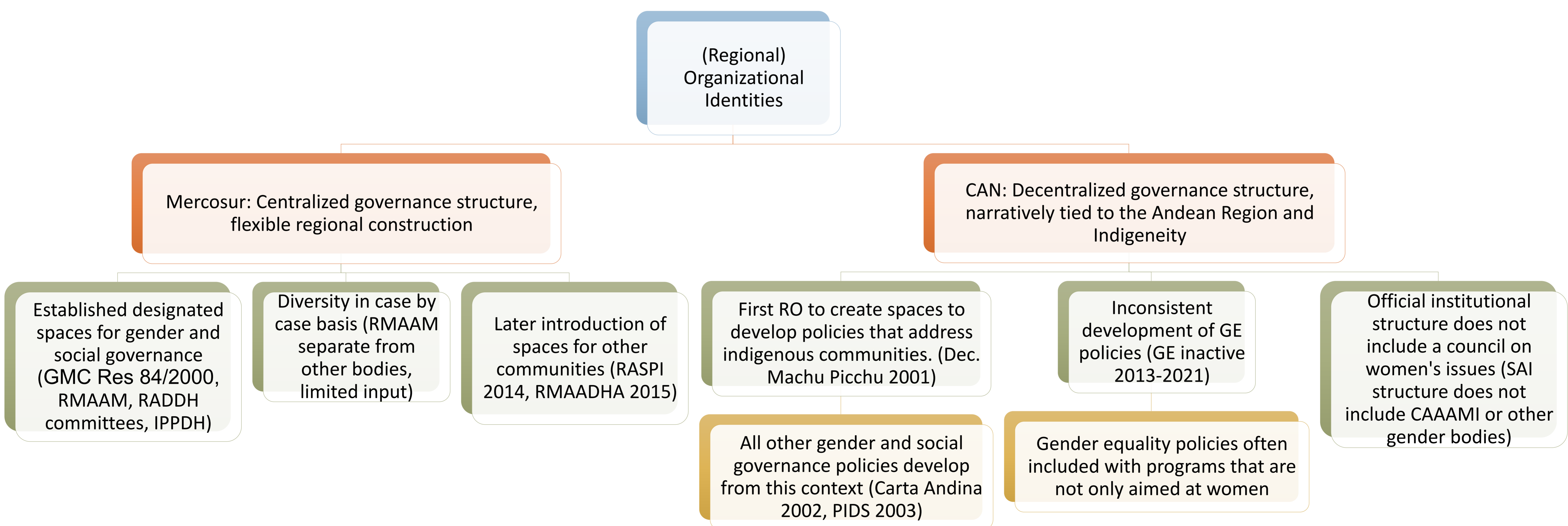
Andean Community of Nations (CAN)

- Andean Pact (1969) - CAN (1996)
- Members: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru
- Common market NO political leanings (1969-1996)-> Common market & political leanings (2000's on)
- Narrative:** Andean region, shared indigenous heritage, sub regional integration
- Gender & Social Governance:** Machu Picchu Declaration (2001) Carta Andina (2002); CAAAMI (2009) [inactive since 2013], temporary commission on gender (2021)

5.a Results: Constructing a (Regional) Organizational Identity



5.b Results: Reflections of a constructed (Regional) Organizational Identity



6. Discussion

Discussions on regional identity construction by regional organizations often misses the practical effects it can have in organizations. By taking two organizations that are considered to be similar in approaches to regional integration and social governance we can see how their policies reflect their separate and distinct (Regional) Organizational Identities.

Future Academic application:

- This research contributes to feminist research on regional organizations and the contextualization of gender norms and regional prioritization of social inclusion.
- Expands on feminist research (Eschle & Miguascha 2018) about the co-optation of political movements and historical narratives by liberal institutions.
- The identification of constructed regional narratives and identities by regional organizations provides insight into the shifting framework from which regional policies are developed. Future work on comparative regionalism and international institutions can further investigate how regional leaders push for or against these frameworks to gain political legitimacy.

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