

**MULTIPLE LOGICS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COOPERATION IN THE SOUTHERN  
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

African governments regularly advocate regionalism as a means for facilitating economic development, but the record of intergovernmental cooperation to implement regional initiatives has been disappointing. Most explanations for this record are based on a simplistic portrayal of the challenges of cooperation. They imply that if governments prefer cooperative outcomes, they will cooperate; conversely, if governments are seen not cooperate, they must not have preferred cooperative outcomes. This thesis uses an alternative framework – derived from game-theoretic perspectives on the logic of collective action – to show that regional initiatives do not succeed or fail simply because of the presence or absence of gains from cooperation. The strategic self-interests of governments are often at odds with the achievement of cooperative outcomes. The inability to overcome resulting problems of collective action explains why many regional initiatives fail despite the support of all member governments. The thesis analyzes several different collective-action problems, using four initiatives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as case studies – involving trade liberalization, financial regulation, infrastructural development, and governance reform. The aim is not just to present a new theoretical perspective on regional cooperation in Africa, but also to illuminate the practical challenges that must be addressed if regional initiatives are to succeed.