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**Topic**

**“Bridging the gap or widening the gap?**

**The Asia Europe Meeting’s role in awakening ‘cognitive regionalism’ (1996-2013)”**

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## ABSTRACT

At the core of this study there lays a paradigm that existing explanation of regionalism and inter-regionalism process neglect the essential, and arguably the most advanced level of it – the cognitive level of regionalism. The theoretical contribution of this study is the concept of “cognitive”/ conscious regionalism”. This dissertation argues that without that element, regional and inter-regional cooperation cannot be advanced and they remain shallow processes.

This study argues that the gap between Asia and Europe is a cognitive one, rather than physical. The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) has been facing severe criticism because of the low effectiveness of its governance. This dissertation explains the reason behind the limits of ASEM in looking into the deeper levels that determine the inter-regional cooperation: level of cognition of the actors involved.

The research not only explains the limits but also identifies the contributions of the ASEM as a bridge between the regions and their peoples’. Creating the venue for interaction contributes to the realization and awakening of the perception of what is “Asia” and what is “Europe” in Asia-Europe Meeting. Incorporating cultural and intellectual agenda of cooperation and including the civil society into the process not only creates the mutual understanding and acquisition of exchanged knowledge but also to pluralization of actors involved in the inter-regional process.

Both in terms of actors and of cultural factors of cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plays the pivotal role in the ASEM process. The process of sustainable interaction shows institutional learning happening between ASEAN and ASEM that proves the idea of acquisition cognition through interaction also between institutions.

This dissertation’s theoretical contribution is offering the concept of ‘cognitive regionalism’. Cognitive regionalism is explained and analyzed through ideas of awakening, acquisition and affiliation. The analysis is done on four levels of inter-regional, sub-regional, member government and civil society. The aspects included in these levels are: regional identity

formation, institutional representation, member government's commitment to ASEM process and civil society inclusiveness in "bottom-up" inter-regionalism.

The empirical contribution of this research is in the richness of extensive interviews with various stakeholders including Track 1, 1½, 2 and 3 representatives from both across Asia and Europe. Methodology is a combination of interpretative, policy-tracing of official documents, official press releases and an essential participatory observation and field work. The originality of this study is twofold: (1) the comprehensive explanation of the role of culture, and norms in the inter-regional cooperation focusing on the third pillar of ASEM particularly and (2) taking the ASEAN's perspective in analysis.



## PREFACE

In December 2008 I attended the ASEM Seminar of Cultural Diversity: Sharing Experiences from Asia and Europe in Hanoi, Vietnam. The following year, I participated in the academic forum of ASEM Education Hub Conference on Comparative Regionalism in Singapore. In 2010 I served as conference rapporteur at the ASEM Workshop on Enhancing ASEM Visibility through Cultural Activities in Halong, Vietnam. The three activities, focusing on cultural, intellectual, and art and media contents of cooperation between Asian and European countries have ignited my interest for the issue of Asia-Europe cultural inter-regionalism.

Although the diverse agenda of three meetings, all of them belong to the third pillar and were coordinated by the Asia Europe Foundation. In spite of equally enthusiastic declarations from both European and Asian members about the importance of the cultural agenda, there is a visible imbalance in terms of involvement and commitment. The very understanding and interpretation of culture as a value, and hence the approach to manage cultural issue also differs in many cases. I got intrigued since by the mechanism and motivations behind cultural cooperation; hence, I set up a goal to explore the importance of culture and cultural cooperation in the inter-regional relations between ASEAN and EU within ASEM arrangements.

Asia-Europe inter-regionalism is a multi-dimensional framework overarching a wide range of participants from Europe and Asia. In this arrangement, the main principle for Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) mechanism is equality among the member states.

Being a part of both Asian and European heritage this topic has special meaning to me. I am not only interested as a researcher, but I deeply care about the relations between Asia and Europe. My personal background gives me possibility to approach and gain trust of each side because of my language abilities as well as familiarity of cultures. I could utilize that in conducting research and interviews, reaching out for candid opinions. Having experience of living both in Asia and Europe I have witnessed prejudice, distorted perceptions, but also interest and curiosity that Asia treats Europe and vice versa. Therefore, I have committed to scientific understanding of the idea of ASEM as a bridge between the cultures. I hope my research can contribute a little more to the mutual understanding of the regions I care about.

**PART 1: RESEARCH DESIGN**



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation embarks on an ambitious purpose of understanding the meaning and the value of a multi-focused inter-regional cooperation of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). In evaluation of ASEM, this research takes up layered approach, taking primarily the cultural dimension of ASEM's contribution to multilateral cooperation and the ASEAN's perspective. The theoretical reasoning of this research combines institutionalist and constructivist approaches in multi-methods analysis.

The purpose of this study is to offer a first comprehensive analysis of the Asia-Europe Meeting process. The analysis looks at different levels of actors – on the inter-regional level of member states and the civil society engagement. In cultural agenda states are not the main actor. Instead people and civil society are the active participants and creators that are playing the central role. This study aims at understanding to what extent the non-state actors are relevant to such a multilateral inter-governmental cooperation framework. In other words, the study examines whether engaging multiple stakeholders into global politics has impact on the nature of international/ inter-regional dialogues. The study measures the effectiveness of multilateralism exercised by a foundation attached to a politically-grounded international institution.

#### **1.1. Summary of the research**

This study offers an evaluation of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). The Asia-Europe Meeting is seen as an exercise of a multilateral process in trans-regional settings. And as such, the nature of the process is a subject of change as the actors in the process change. The Asia Europe Meeting is much different now than 17 years before when it came into life. The conditions both within each region of Asia and Europe, as well as the nature of inter-regional relations have much changed.

At the moment, as Asian regional processes intensify, the European integration is facing some serious challenges. The landscape is much different from the time the Asia-Europe inter-regionalism was developed. The definitions of involved regions have altered as seen from the enlargement of ASEM. The driving forces behind the inter-regional dialogue and the very nature of it have also changed.

This research looks at ASEM by analysing the change of actors, particularly focusing on the ASEAN and its recent development. In evaluating ASEM, this research takes multi-level of analysis:

- (1) inter-regional level - regional identity formation;**
- (2) sub-regional level - ASEAN collective representation;**
- (3) government members' level - benefiting from public diplomacy tools that ASEM and ASEF give;**
- (4) civil society level - engagement of various interest groups and actors;**

A double theoretical approach is adopted, building a framework of institutional and constructivist theories.

The analysis incorporates concepts of constructivist and institutionalist theories. Various angles of ASEAN's participation in ASEM are discussed, including concepts of socialization, norm discussion, identity-building, as well as institutionalisation, functional cooperation, and region-building through inter-regionalism.

ASEM as a platform engaging 51 members from Asia and Europe, involves the intergovernmental entities of European Commission and ASEAN Secretariat, enables an interaction in diverse and crosscutting areas. It is also the only multilateral forum that ASEAN appears as a single member, on top of membership of all its countries. The ASEM multi-sectoral cooperation is framed under three pillars structure. The economic and political pillars have been much anticipated by global community, because it was the first time that such framework of multilateral cooperation has been launched. But it is the socio-cultural agenda that is the unique feature of ASEM collaboration, distinguishing it from other regional and inter-regional institutions. Exploring various fields of engagement, this study argues that the soft power of



ASEM is its value-added socio-cultural agenda. This under-examined issue is examined through the perception of ASEAN's interests and benefits.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate up-to-date, and outline the possible role that ASEAN have and can play in ASEM. As the arrangements where ASEAN can form a collective policy towards, ASEM offers the potentials that for ASEAN to act as a united entity in counterpart with Europe and other Asian countries.

#### **1.1.1. Background of the problem and the research puzzle**

When established in 1996 the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was anticipated to counter-balance the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It was envisioned to be of at least equal weight as to balance out the U.S. influence. Where it is today? What has it missed out that it has become a forum of more of social-diplomatic venue, than of real political significance? At what moment it has given up the potential it has and become only thinly interesting fatigue?

At the moment of inception, ASEM was expected to contribute to the consolidation of Asian identity. ASEM was even expected to enhance so called "regionalism through inter-regionalism". Given the transformation of Asian regionalism as well as the balance of global politics a series of questions come to mind: Where is ASEM now in its identity politics? Does Asia still need ASEM to builds its regional "Asian" identity? What is ASEM identity itself in facing the enlargement of neither Asian nor European countries? Is it redefining itself? Has ASEM bridged the gap as it intended or has the gap kept widening? Why ASEM didn't bridge the gap between Asia and Europe as it originally intended to? Does that mean that Europe does not want to re-discover Asia? Why Asia does not have interest in Europe and vice versa? These questions all lead to the main purpose of this research is to understand what are the *de facto* the contribution and the meaning of the Asia Europe Meeting.

From a very highly anticipated forum that could have had great potential of global governance to an expanding organization beyond Asia and Europe, but with little impact. While horizontally it kept growing in size, vertically, its impact remains (or even become more) shallow. That might imply that combination of "ASEAN Way" (read: 'Asian style') with

European-pushed agenda, cannot produce any meaningful outcome; that there will not be a third way as a result of the “bridging”.

Does that mean that on traditional, mainstream of International Relations, high politics cannot work? Only low politics (third pillar) can get benefits from such bridging? According to the argumentation of this research is that culture, values, norms and understanding in the politics – how perceptions, understanding (or misunderstanding) and values affect the inter-regional cooperation. ASEM is the only political cooperation mechanism (inter-regional) institution that culture factor is most heavy in.

ASEM, originally intended to be the “Euro-Asian answer” to APEC, with a focus on economic issues. As it turned out, ‘political dialogue and cooperation on social/cultural issues’ have been especially important. ‘The dialogue among cultures and civilisations’ and ‘interfaith dialogue’ have become the keywords. In a culturalist view there is a pre-supposition of distinct Asian and Western cultures have been at the root of ASEM’ inevitably promotes the idea of an ‘Asia’ community transcending the highly complex Asian region.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.1.2. Motivation of the study**

The Asia-Europe cooperation has contributed immensely not only to the two regions’ development, but to global multilateralism as well. The leaders from both regions value the occasion of exchange and collaboration towards mutual growth. ASEM represents new inter-regionalism that is comprehensive and multi-sectoral, basing on the three main pillars; trade and investment, politics and security as well as socio-cultural and environmental cooperation. Inter-regionalism has been explored by academia in terms of economic cooperation and investment (first pillar), political and security dialogue (second pillar), studies have been made over comparative regionalism as well as dialogue on human rights.

However, little attention has been paid to the third pillar, surprisingly the most effective within ASEM capacity. Hence, this research as a pioneer topic, serves explorative and

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<sup>1</sup> Bart Geans, *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). P. 95-99

descriptive objectives to shed a light on the phenomena, nature and consequences of inter-regional peoples' flow that has been intensified in the recent years.

The reason for the interest on the subject is personal experience of participating in several Asia-Europe inter-regional dialogues: ASEM Seminar of Cultural Diversity: Sharing Experiences from Asia and Europe, December 2008, ASEM Education Hub Conference on Comparative Regionalism, December 2009, and ASEM Workshop on Enhancing ASEM Visibility through Cultural Activities, April 2010. These experiences gave me a closure to the essence of inter-regional dialogue, involving official levels of representation as well as people's level of practitioners. Although the diverse agenda of three meetings, all of them belong to the third pillar and were coordinated by the Asia Europe Foundation. I gained observation on the character of exchange between the Europeans and Asians when it comes to the cultural agenda.

In spite of equally enthusiastic declarations from both sides about the importance of the cultural agenda, there is a visible imbalance in terms of involvement and commitment. The very understanding and interpretation of culture as a value, and hence the approach to manage cultural issue also differs in many cases. The seminar on Cultural Diversity was heavily UNESCO-driven, where experience from Europe and Asia were shared over the practices of implementation the UNESCO Convention on Promoting and Protecting Diversity of Cultural Expressions from 2005. Experience sharing between the, somehow more experienced in terms of dealing with legal aspects of culture, Europeans with, in many cases limited by economic conditions or with less explicit cultural protection clauses, Asians had to be held sensitively.

In the case of the Workshop on Enhancing ASEM Visibility through Cultural Activities was designed because of the relatively low level of visibility of the organization. The European representatives tended to strategize cultural cooperation as a multi-directional process involving multiple actors, whereas some Asian presenters offered a cultural diplomacy tactics, which is unidirectional and understands culture as a tool for political (and up to a certain degree economic) promotion.

I got intrigued since by the mechanism and motivations behind cultural cooperation, and the questions why the Europeans in many cases advocate or even “push” their partners in terms of launching cultural projects? And how ASEAN can benefit from such experience of cultural

cooperation? Through those observations, a conclusion was reached that cultural issues within such dialogues exceed the scope of “dance and song”, but involve political, economic, social, legal, international and inter-regional relations. Hence, I set up a goal to explore the importance of culture and cultural cooperation in the inter-regional relations between ASEAN and EU within ASEM arrangements. It is a contribution to Knowledge, as the essence of the third pillar has barely been academically discussed. Moreover, this study takes up on ASEAN perspective, which with combination of culturalist angle, is an innovative research agenda.

The second dimension of this study’s significance is the contribution to the understanding of evolving process of Southeast Asian community building. The Asia-Pacific region recently has been eager to emerge in the process of regionalism and community building. Yet, with the ASEAN economic integration and the political will to create “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”, there is still insufficient understanding of cultures that encompass the region. The definition of community still needs further development. As the deadline for establishment of ASEAN Community in 2015 is approaching, the concerns are raised upon relatively slow progress and low level of awareness of the process.

The contribution of this study is the analysis going beyond official declaration, but examination of the processes in reality and the level of participation of the peoples. Majority of researches on Asian identity concentrate on collective action of states, regional institutions, organizations, ministries and associations that implement decisions about community-building. The trend of integration in Asia has been noticed and policy-makers and the supra-governmental organizations favour accelerating this trend. Yet, very few studies have been completed over the socio-cultural implications. Neither a study has looked at inter-regional exchanges from intercultural relations’ perspective. In existing analyses, the European perspectives are dominant in the field. This study brings an innovative perspective of ASEAN’s role in the Asia-Europe framework, and addresses the un-explored question of ASEM’s “low politics” significance for ASEAN.

Apart from contribution to academia, this research attempts to serve as a reference point for ASEAN in policy-creation for ASEAN Community. It is looking at the third pillar of exchanges and tries to contribute to conceptualizing the idea of “People-oriented ASEAN”,

participatory regionalism, and the build-up for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. I also hope to contribute to ASEF and ASEM in terms of evaluation their program planning and evaluation, as well as to the European Union for a developing better understanding of cultural relations with Southeast Asia.

### **1.1.3. Contribution of the study**

The motivation of this study is the dissatisfaction of the existing discourse about regionalism and inter-regionalism. The literature disregards the idealistic dimension of cognition and perception. Both cognitive and perceptual factors are essential for building identity. Identity is the last and most mature form of regionalism, and hence inter-regionalism. Hence, this study embarks on the ambitious task of offering an interpretation of regionalism and inter-regionalism analysis that would include the ideational consideration.

This research contributes to the literature on Southeast Asian regional and Asia-Europe inter-regional institutions by providing a comprehensive understanding of ASEM based on different dimensions: regional identity building, foreign policy advancement, and design of a regional institution. This thesis adds to the study of the impact of external forces, namely the EU, on the development of regional awareness in Asia by exploring the cognitive experience and inter-subjective understanding among participants in the ASEM process.

The original contributions of this study that differ it from other existing research on ASEM are on two levels. First it adopts ASEAN's perspective of examining its original intentions, transformation of priorities and identifying the potential for ASEAN to explore. Secondly, it offers a first comprehensive study over the cultural aspects of cooperation. While most of the existing literature includes the third pillar in the evaluation, it is always treated as an addition, rather than the main focus. This thorough holistic evaluation argues that it is the third pillar of cultural cooperation that represents the most concrete outcomes of ASEM process. To explain its value, this study employs the multiple-theory approach to design a comprehensive framework for understanding the extensive and complex matter of ASEM process. Traditional International Relations theories are not accurate for interpreting ASEM.

The theoretical contribution of this study is the analysis of earlier not examined aspects of cultural cooperation and the ASEAN angle. The original contribution is the empirical data obtained from various field trips and numerous interviews with a variety of actors from Track 1, 1,5, 2 and 3.

#### **1.1.4. Organization of the dissertation**

This study is divided into three parts. The first part, composed of chapter one and two, is dedicated to the structural dimension of the research. Chapter one outlines the background of the problem and the research puzzle, explains the motivation of studying the issues and identifies the contribution of this study. It then, offers a comprehensive literature review, recognizing the existing studies and grouping them into theoretical and thematic clusters. The literature review serves the understanding of the phenomena studies but also to identify the gaps in the existing studies and pinpoints this dissertation's innovative contribution. The second chapter presents the research design. It offers a conceptualization of the examined cases, presenting a thorough explanation of multi-framework of analysis. Research questions, working hypotheses and methodology applied are explained next to the elaboration of the concepts adopted in the levels of analysis.

The second section, composed of chapters three, four and five, gives a thorough explanation on the historical as well as the current development of ASEM and ASEAN. This part serves as contextualization of the research, showcasing the changes that this research tracks. It combines literature review and policy tracing to understand the transformation of the institutions. Such analysis also allows me to analyze the objectives and motivations of actors involved.

Chapter three offers historical background and the development leading to the establishment of the Asia-Europe Meeting. It explains external factors of world order affecting Asian and European regional processes separately and forming the inter-regional relations collectively.

Chapter four continues on the nature of regional institutions, particularly focusing on the characteristics of ASEAN and the EU political norms. This chapter examines the institutional



differences leading to cooperation difficulties. Cooperation cultures and political identities are consequences of this discussion. The bottom line of this analysis is the function of interaction and socialization that allows not only better understanding of each other but also oneself. Hence, the argumentation about the identity formation based on the notion of cognitive learning that is predominant to this dissertation.

While chapter four focuses on the leadership levels, the following chapter five discusses such interaction and socialization on the people's levels. By analyzing the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) which acts as a bridge between the ASEM governments and their peoples, this chapter explains what is done on the "bottom" level. Focusing on the examples of cultural and educational exchanges, this chapter looks at the engagement of civil society in the inter-regional process. This chapter has two level of analysis – at first one it looks at participatory of civil society and democratization of the ASEM process, and hence also socialization of certain norms between Asia and Europe. On the second level it looks at "democratization" of ASEM by examining its relations with ASEF. All of this discussion follows the paradigm of interaction and communication of priorities, which are dictated by the norms.

The third part, composed of chapter six and seven, analyzes the changes that have occurred within Asia and in Asia-Europe relations. The purpose of this section is to evaluate the Asia-Europe Meeting during its almost two decades of existence. Unlike the existing literature that focuses on the first phase of ASEM or on criticism after the Asian Financial Crisis, this research contributes an evaluation perspective of change. The changes also have taken place on the levels of members of ASEM, and this study argues that they affect significantly the ASEM as the organization as well.

Chapter six looks at the transformation of ASEAN as the agent of change in ASEM process. It analyses the position and role of ASEAN from the establishment of ASEM until the recent change of balance due to the EU's crisis. In this part, I analyze the context change putting emphasis on the ASEAN's role, as well as the context of global balance of power arguing why the ASEM has lost its original legitimation of existence.

Chapter seven offers a comprehensive evaluation of ASEM process in terms of political, economic and cultural values that it has brought to regional and inter-regional developments.

This chapter also looks at the enlargement of ASEM as posing challenges and redefining the purpose of the organization. It is a finalizing analysis chapter in which I evaluate the meaning of ASEM on two levels: 1) regional-governmental: ASEAN as an Asian regional entity, and 2) on the civil society level.

The final chapter eight offers a conclusion of previous analyses bringing together different levels of analysis and offering an answer to the research questions posed and suggests several recommendations.

## **1.2. Literature review**

### **1.2.1. Inter-regionalism**

Traditional International Relations literature views regionalism and inter-regionalism in various perspectives that rarely included extensive explanation or even an inclusion of concepts of perception, cognition and identity. Only a number of authors, including Peter Katzenstein, Alexander Wendt and Amitav Acharya, touched upon these notions.

The Asia-Europe relations is often analysed from inter-regionalism theory. Inter-regionalism is a studies area within International Relations that underlines the interaction between regions. Inter-regionalism, developed after 1960s, is the second wave of regional institution-building, also called “new regionalism”. Inter-regionalism emerged “*as a post-Cold War product and entails the encounter of two regions as distinct and equal actors in a dialogue going beyond trade, economy and including political, security-related, and cultural issues*”<sup>2</sup>

In the context of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is a profound representation of this form of group-to-group dialogue. ASEM is a unique forum for interregional dialogue, integrating the “Asian way” of informality and in the same time the European spirit of formalization and institutionalization. ASEM represents new inter-regionalism that is comprehensive and multi-sectoral, basing on the three main pillars; trade and investment,

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<sup>2</sup> Bart Geans, "Pitfalls and Potential of Region-to-Region Interaction in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)," in *ISA Conference, EU's Relations with Asia: Assessing Past Perspectives and Defining New Directions* (New York 2009).



politics and security as well as socio-cultural and environmental cooperation. It is based on a low level of institutionalization, usually at the ministerial, ambassadorial and senior officials' levels, supplemented by *ad hoc* experts' working groups.

Inter-regionalism refers to processes of cooperation between regions that are initiated by governments or the bureaucracies of regional organizations. The term "inter-regional" is generic covering a broad range of phenomena. Theoretically it has been distinguished the types of relationship within inter-regionalism as "bilateral inter-regionalism", "bi-regionalism" or "pure inter-regionalism" which all basically describe a group-to-group relationship (Gilson 2002, Hanggi 2006, Ruland 2006, Ruland, Schubert, Schucher and Storz 2008, Robles 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Bilateral inter-regionalism, such as the ASEAN-EU relationship, can be defined as group-to-group dialogues with more or less regular meetings centring around exchanges of information and cooperation in specific policy fields. Inter-regionalism reflects that, in the view of increasing cross-border issues, regional organizations have begun to pool and share sovereignty and resources to establish direct communicative links to each other.

Inter-regionalism establishes a new layer of international relations, as it engages the non-state actors. Regional level of governance is gradually becoming preferred, or at least, encouraged forum of dialogue and response to both traditional and non-traditional security issues. Moreover, inter-regionalism is concerned to be a new way for overcoming "discriminatory power balance", by increasing the chances for small and medium states to influence international decision making.

Alfredo Robles' volume on theories of inter-regionalism provides a comprehensive international relations look at the development of inter-regionalism. The authors gave an overview from regionalism to inter-regionalism analysing other trans-regional grouping than

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<sup>3</sup> Julie Gilson, "Concepts of Inter-regionalism," in *Gilson Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting*, ed. Julie Gilson (Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2002); Heiner Hanggi, "Interregionalism: as a multifaceted phenomenon: in search for a typology," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, ed. Ralf Roloff and Jurgen Ruland Heiner Hanggi (New York: Routledge, 2005); Jürgen Ruland, "Interregionalism: An Unfinished Agenda," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, ed. Ralf Roloff and Jurgen Ruland Heiner Hanggi (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jürgen Ruland, *Asian-European relations : building blocks for global governance?*, Routledge contemporary Asia series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008); Alfredo C. Robles Jr., *The Asia-Europe Meeting. The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

ASEM in comparative perspective. The current state of inter-regionalism is summarized and categories in terms of the degree of institutionalization: hard and soft institutionalization, are distinguished. The mentioned literature provides a sound contribution in the theoretical categorization of functions that inter- and trans-regional forum exerts.

### **1.2.2. The Five Functions of inter-regionalism from the mainstream International Relations approaches**

In the theoretical literature a number of scholars have listed five functions of inter-regionalism (Gilson 2002, Dent 2004, Roloff 2006, Ruland and Storz 2008).<sup>4</sup> Robles offered the clearest classification. The five foci are as following:

- (1) balancing (and bandwagoning) the political and economic disequilibria,
- (2) rationalizing,
- (3) institution-building through formation of new coordination mechanisms,
- (4) agenda-setting for multilateral fora, and finally
- (5) identity-building.

Institutional balancing is to address political and economic imbalances by readjusting institutional influence and formation coordination mechanisms. Institution-building, rationalizing and agenda-setting are function associate with liberal institutionalism. Institution-building refers to the claim that inter-regional forums contribute to an emerging multilayered system of global governance. Rationalizing and agenda-setting are regarded as requisites for the management of interdependence, a key function of global governance. Since they are mainly based on the consensus of preferences, making negotiation processes easier. Identity building in the context of inter-regionalism refers to a reflexive process of interaction, in which cognitive factors shape and sharpen regional identities, is a process of emerging the Self in the encounter with the *Other*.

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<sup>4</sup> Julie Gilson, "Defining Inter-Regionalism: The Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)," *SEAS Electronic Working Papers* 1, no. 1 (2002); Christopher M. Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-Regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 2 (2004); Ralf Roloff, "Interregionalism in theoretical perspective: State of the Art," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, ed. Ralf Roloff and Jurgen Ruland Heiner Hanggi (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Jürgen Rüländ saw balancing as “soft balancing”. The function of balancing places greater emphasis on the global distribution of institutional power. “*Soft balancing involves interregional forums in short-term coalition-building, the fluid nature of which entails few incentives for states and regional organizations to invest in the governance costs associated with building enduring and ‘deep’ institutions*”.<sup>5</sup>

Table1: Inter-regionalism: functions, theory and foci

Function	Theory	Focus
Balancing	Realism	External
Institution building	Institutionalism	
Interregional		External
Intra-regional		Internal
Rationalizing	Institutionalism	External
Agenda setting	Institutionalism	External
Collective identity formation	Constructivism	Internal

Source: Quoted from Mathew Doidge “*Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Inter-regionalism*”<sup>6</sup>

From the mainstream of international relations, inter-regionalism has been studied by realists, liberal institutionalists and constructivists. The first group tends to see inter- and trans-regional fora in category of coalitions or alliances of regional players to exercise power. Hence, they underline the balancing function of the region-to-region relations. For realists, ASEM is an inter-governmental forum in which cooperation takes place because there is coincidence in actors’ interests. Ruland (1996, 2000, 2002)<sup>7</sup> extensively argued that Asia and Europe were pushed

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Rüländ, “Balancers, Multilateral utilities or global identity builders? International Relations and the study of Interregionalism ” *Journal of European Public Policy* 17, no. 8 (2010). P. 1280

<sup>6</sup> Mathew Doidge, “Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism,” *European Integration* 29, no. 2 (2007). P. 232

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Rüländ, *The Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM) : towards a new Euro-Asian relationship?* , Rostocker Informationen zu Politik und Verwaltung, (Rostock: Universität Rostock, Institut für Politik- und Verwaltungswissenschaften, 1996).; Jürgen Rüländ, *Asia-Europe Coopeation - The ASEAM process: A European View*, ed. Magnus Jerneck and Ulrich Niemann, Asia and Europe: Regional Cooperation in a Globalizing World

towards cooperation because of the US dominance. Particularly Europe feared isolation as the East Asian economies grew in importance.

Preston and Gilson's volume (Preston & Gilson 2001)<sup>8</sup> is concerned with interchange between the internal dynamics and regional inter-linkages of the EU and East Asia. They saw the core dynamics behind the establishing the ASEM as: the extension of European power in Asia, European domination and the demand of empire, European eclipse and the US hegemony, and Asia's recovery and rise after the financial crisis, and Europe-Asia relations in the contemporary global system.

Realism, by default not believing in cooperation, is not adequate for explaining the cooperation of regions encompassed of multiple states and some regional institutions (the EC and ASEAN Secretariat are the members as well). The balancing component of ASEM versus APEC did not work, hence realism theory is no longer discussed in this dissertation.

Institutionalists, on the other hand, regard cooperation as a key to mitigate the anarchical character of international relations, to minimize the incidence of conflict and to enhance the welfare of peoples. Moreover, cooperation intensifies the flow of information between actors, builds trust and enhances the predictability of state behaviour. By this token, inter- and trans-regional fora add another layer to the international system and thus enhance the institutional density. Such format creates an increasing demand for internal coordination as members or regional organizations are advised to invent common positions prior to summits and meetings. Furthermore, great powers while involved in the process, they also socialize into cooperative multilateralism.<sup>9</sup>

Institution-building refers to a process of progressive institutionalization of international relations and institutional differentiation. Unlike realist theory that focuses on competition and conflict, institutionalist, or more precisely neo-institutionalist theory rather tries to explain the nature and existence of cooperation in international institutions. In this particular case, it asks

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(Singapore: Asia Europe Foundation, 2000).; Jürgen Rüland, "Interregionalism in International Relations. Conference Summary," in *Seminar für Wissenschaftliche Politik* (Freiburg 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Peter W. Preston and Julie Gilson, *The European Union and East Asia: Interregional Linkages in a Changing Global System* (Northampton Edward Elgar, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Jürgen Rüland, "ASEAN and the European Union: A Bumpy Inter-regional Relationship," *Discussion Paper* c95(2001).

question whether ASEM has contributed to evolution of norms and regimes in governing the cooperation between Asia and Europe.

However, interregional fora face certain obstacles constraining institutional-building functions. So called “shallow institutionalization” (informality, non-legally binding decisions), create little or no enforcing compliance mechanisms. The pillared structure is criticized to cause dual problem of reducing efficiency and signifying democracy deficit. Interregional dialogues “suffer from the twin-deficit of ‘input’ and ‘output’ legitimacy”.<sup>10</sup>

Interregional dialogue fora can be considered as novel layers of governance which can be traced back in their origins to the early 1970s with the EU and ASEAN building up hub-and-spoke systems of bilateral and consecutively also multilateral forms of interregionalism.<sup>11</sup>

Functions of interregionalism focus on the collective action, which relate to system of global governance. “*However, a closer look at these functions reveals that they are more theoretically deduced than empirically real*”<sup>12</sup>. Ruland pointed out that, although there is a lack of systematic empirical research testing the underlying assumptions, it seems that except for the balancing and bandwagoning functions, all other functions attached to ASEM are only weakly developed. Balancing and bandwagoning relate to the power dimension of international relations, hence interregional fora such as ASEM play a role of an arena in triadic power contest (Hanggi 1999).<sup>13</sup> ASEM in this perspective reflects a European strategy of bandwagoning in the face of Asia’s unprecedented economic growth, and American’s dominance expressed in forming the APEC.<sup>14</sup>

Five functions of inter-regionalism reflect the recognition that international relations are characterized by a complex mix of policies and processes informed by an array of theoretical

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<sup>10</sup> Ruland, "Balancers, Multilateral utilities or global identity builders? International Relations and the study of Interregionalism ". P. 1276

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Edwards and Elfriede Regelsberger (eds), *Europe's Global Links* (Pinter Publishers, London, 1990); Christopher Piening, *Global Europe: The European Union in World Affairs* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1997)

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance," in *Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies* (Washington 2002).

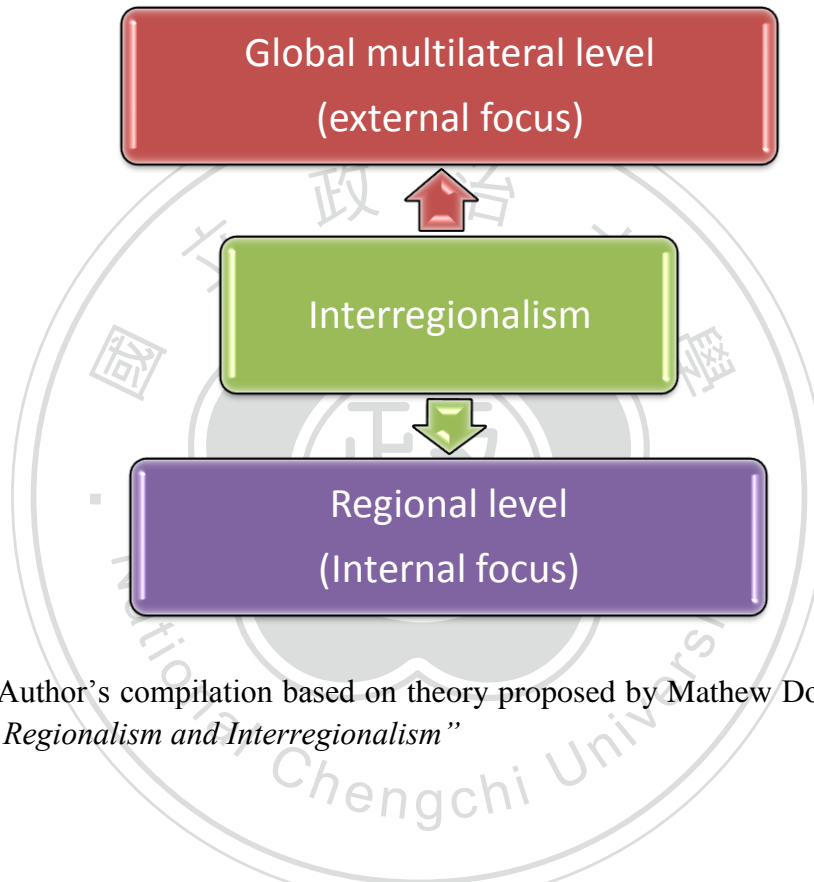
<sup>13</sup> Heiner Hanggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

approaches, rather than by a single theoretical construct. Those functions see inter-regionalism as functioning in two directions:

- a. upward to the global multilateral level (external focus) and
- b. downward to regional level (internal focus)<sup>15</sup>

Graph 1: Directions of inter-regionalism



Source: Author's compilation based on theory proposed by Mathew Doidge's "*Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism*"

Alfredo Robles disagreed on the functional perspective of interregionalism in the form of five above mentioned functions. His criticism came from a stand, in which he believed that interregional relations form a post-colonial *dependencia* perspective with the political economy of Asia-Europe relations at the centre. He saw EU's interaction with Asia as far from ideal situation, and EU as a hardly qualified normative power, but rather an actor pursuing self-centred economic objectives at the expense of Asia's developing countries.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Doidge, "Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism." P. 232-233

<sup>16</sup> Alfredo C. Robles, *The Asia-Europe meeting : the theory and practice of interregionalism*, Routledge contemporary Asia series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008).

Inter-regionalism hence can be seen from different utility perspectives. In Robles' view, historical and cultural aspects of colonialism bring up issues of perceptions and norms that this dissertation addresses further.

### 1.2.3. Old versus New: Typologies of inter-regionalism

Interregionalism is a product of the so-called 'new regionalism', a second wave of regional institution-building following a first wave in the 1950s and 1960s. Before going to details in outlining the differences between inter-regionalism and other forms of "new regionalism", let's see what qualifies as "new".

Table 3: Old regionalism vs. New Regionalism

Old Regionalism	New Regionalism
Context: bipolar cold-war	Context: multi-polar world order
Only concerned relations between formally sovereign states	Increasingly other actors are the main proponents for regional integration
Clear objectives, some organization being security oriented and other being economically oriented	Often described as 'open; and thus compatible with an interdependent world economy
Economic integration was inward-oriented and protectionist	More comprehensive multi-dimensional process which includes trade and economic integration, environment, social policy, security and democracy, Issue of accountability and legitimacy

Source: Quoted from enny Lind Elmaco, "European Foreign Policy and the Asia-Europe Alliance: A Transregionalist Response."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from: Jenny Lind Elmaco, "European Foreign Policy and the Asia-Europe Alliance: A Transregionalist Response," *GARNET Working Paper N 48*, no. 08 (2008). P. 11 Compare to: Hettne.



Under above mentioned conditions, ASEM is considered as “new multilateralism” is the notion of bottom-up process. It promotes a post-hegemonic plurality of orders inviting inter-subjectivities and interpretations of the world.

In the theoretical literature there often appear other terms linked to inter-regionalism. Ruland (2010) made a concise literature review on the inter-regionalism debates.<sup>18</sup> He classified patterns of inter-regionalism into three types: (1), bi-regionalism (2) trans-regionalism, and (3) hybrid inter-regionalism.

1. Bi-regionalism refers to group-to-group dialogues organized in a hub-and-spokes relationship, particularly organized around the European Union. There are no or little common institutions and both sides rely on their own institutional infrastructures. Examples of bi-regionalism are EU-ASEAN, EU-Mercosur, EU-South African Development Community (SADC) or ASEAN-Mercosur.<sup>19</sup>

2. Trans-regionalism denotes to a dialogue process with more diffuse membership, which does not necessarily include only regional organizations but also member states from more than two regions. It is characterized with more heterogeneity and the members maintain their autonomy from regional organizations. A living example is the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

3. Hybrid inter-regionalism or quasi-interregional relations is a “residual category” including inter-continental forums (Africa-Europe process, Europe-Latin America relations, Far East-Latin America Cooperation of FEALAC) and strategic partnerships (EU with US, Russia, China, Japan, India, Mexico or South Africa). Since one party is a nation state; the relationship blurs boundaries with the currently booming bilateralism. This form was named as “imagined

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<sup>18</sup> Ruland, "Balancers, Multilateral utilities or global identity builders? International Relations and the study of Interregionalism".

<sup>19</sup> Ruland, "Interregionalism: An Unfinished Agenda."



inter-regionalism” (Holland 2006)<sup>20</sup> or “inter-regionalism without regions” (Ruland and Bechle 2010)<sup>21</sup>.

Table 2: Typology of inter-regionalism

Type	Characteristics	Members	Examples
<b>Bi-regionalism</b>	group-to-group dialogues organized in a hub-and-spokes relationship	Groups	EU-ASEAN, EU-Mercosur, EU-South African Development Community (SADC) or ASEAN-Mercosur
<b>Trans-regionalism</b>	dialogue process with more diffuse membership; heterogeneity of members who maintain their autonomy	does not necessarily include only regional organizations but also member states from more than two regions	Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).
<b>Hybrid inter-regionalism (quasi-interregional relations)</b>	Takes forms of inter-continental forums and strategic partnerships	inter-continental forums and nation states	Africa-Europe process, Europe-Latin America relations, Far East-Latin America Cooperation of FEALAC; EU with US, Russia, China, Japan, India, Mexico or South Africa

Source: Author’s compilation based on literature

<sup>20</sup> Martin Holland, "“Imagined” interregionalism: Europe’s relations with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP)," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, ed. Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Ruland Heiner Hanggi (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Ruland and Karsten Bechle, "Interregionalism without regions: IBSA as a form of shallow multilateralism," in *Asia and Latin America: Political, Economic and Multilateral Relations*, ed. Olaf Jacob Jörn Dosch (Routledge Contemporary Asia Series, 2010).

While interregional relations are group-to-group dialogues without common overarching institutions, trans-regional fora have a more diffuse membership. Ruland (1999, 2002) and Yeo (2000) recognized that through common, albeit loose institutions, they develop some form of independent actorness which distinguishes them from group-to-group dialogues. Examples of transregional dialogues are the EU-ASEAN, EU-Mercosur or ASEAN-Mercosur relations. Examples for transregional fora are the APEC, ASEM or IOR-ARC.<sup>22</sup>

#### 1.2.4. Defining a Region

Above was the summary of existing discussion on the forms of regionalism and inter-regionalism. In this discussion of ASEM and behaviours of regions, a clarification of the understanding of a region is essential. The following is the theoretical debate on the concept of “region”.

*“The literature on new regionalism stresses several key linkage factors as necessary conditions under which regionalism or regional integration can take place among a group of states, including linkage by geographical proximity and by various forms of shared political, economic, social, cultural, or institutional affinities. Regions are also defined by combinations of geographical, psychological, and behavioural characteristics.”<sup>23</sup>*

Hettne (2003) defined regions as less of “natural” entities formed by geographic continuity, but more of social and political constructions based on material transactions and interdependence as well as cognitive factors facilitating “regioness” such as shared norms, identities, practices and institutions.<sup>24</sup> Based on such deliberation, the second chapter will elaborate the concepts of analysis related to the contribution and life circle of international regimes.

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<sup>22</sup> Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

<sup>23</sup> Samuel S. Kim, 'Regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia,' Journal of East Asian Studies, No. 4, January 2004, p.40

<sup>24</sup> Bjorn Hettne, "The New Regionalism revisited," in *Theories of New Regionalism*, ed. Timothy M. Shaw Fredrik Söderbaum (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

According to Gilson (2002) a region is “*what a region thinks itself to be*”<sup>25</sup>. Taking upon this cognitive understanding, or more specifically, self-understanding of what and how regions are perceived, there comes the question of identity. Regional identity is another important function and contribution that both regionalism and inter-regionalism processes bring the scholarship. In the evaluation part of this dissertation (Chapter Seven) it will be further elaborated how cognitive perceptions define the existing regions and their relationships.

Identity-building is listed as another function of inter-regionalism. This function has been particularly examined by the constructivists who claimed that interaction through inter-regionalism can further regionalism. Julie Gilson (2003) and together with Yeo Lay Hwee (2004) and Stephanie Lawson (2002, 2003) are among the authors that focus on the identity discourse of the Asia-Europe Meeting.<sup>26</sup> This identity discourse shall be further elaborated in the Chapter Four dedicated to norms and identity.

Constructivists view the cooperation from a cognitive perspective, as a result of previous experiences and interactions. Therefore, the argument that inter-regional dialogues stimulates collective identities by sharpening differences of Self and Other. Fostering “regionalism through inter-regionalism” (Gilson 1998, 2002, Hanggi 1999)<sup>27</sup> in the case of Asia-Europe Meeting has been both intentional and unintended, which will be further developed in latter section of socio-cultural interaction. Gilson’s (2002) analysis focused on the nature of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism and stressed the uniqueness of ASEM as a cross-/ trans-regional institution. The author offered the definition of Asia as a region, and the role of ASEM’s inter-regionalism in regional identity formation by adopting the concept of “Other”. Gilson paid attention to the imaginary of mutual perception of the two regions. She analysed also EU-ASEAN economic

<sup>25</sup> Julie Gilson, *Asia meets Europe : inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar Pub., 2002). P. 27

<sup>26</sup> Julie Gilson, "Forging Identities on the Margins of ASEM," in *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*, ed. Stephanie Lawson (London, New York: Routledge, 2003).; Julie Gilson and Lay Hwee Yeo, "Collective Identity-Building through Trans-regionalism," in *The Eurasian Space: Far More than Two Continents*, ed. Paul van der Velde Wim Stokhof, Yeo Lay Hwee (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2004).; Stephanie Lawson, "ASEM and the Politics of Regional Identity," in *Conference on The European Union in International Affairs, National Europe Centre, Australian National University* (Canberra 2002).; Stephanie Lawson, *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region* (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Julie Gilson, "Defining Asia through ASEM: the EMU Creates a New Partner," in *Third pan-European Conference on International Relations* (Vienna 1998); Julie Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2002); Hanggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad."

links, trade and aid and the role of ASEM. In terms of political dialogue, the author discussed security questions and the problem areas of cooperation (including the Australia's position). The book provided an explanatory framework for understanding the three-pillar dimension of Europe-Asian relations.

Other analysts looked at identity building process through the lenses of regional institutionalization, often in comparative perspective with the EU. Jurgen Ruland related to identity issue as following:

*“Regional identity may be fostered through conflictive and asymmetrical relationships between regional organizations or if one of the regional organizations adopts the role of an external federator such as the EU does.”<sup>28</sup>*

Before this dissertation embarks on the main argumentation about the inter-regional cooperation, there is a question that needs to be answered in the first place: Whether “regions” really exist? Does a region have its own regional interests, and can different regions, with different regional interests cooperate? This research follows the paradigm that for a region to become a meaningful actor of inter-regional cooperation, the region ought to be reborn as an amalgamated representative of the interests of all or most of the regional constituents. Otherwise, inter-regionalism would remain only in the level of rhetoric.<sup>29</sup>

One of the ways to build such an amalgamated “region” is to build a strong regional organization through which constituents’ interests may be coordinated by an agreed framework. The other way is to develop a solid regional identity among the constituents to produce strong common regional interests. In other words, region-making is a purposeful act of the states in designing the ideal features of their region.<sup>30</sup> For inter-regional cooperation to be effective, region-making should be given priority to. Moreover, for a meaningful inter-regional cooperation, a massive participation of civil society in the process is required.

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<sup>28</sup> Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

<sup>29</sup> Geun Lee, "Implications of the Asian value discourse on ASEM?," *Global Economic Review: Perspectives on East Asian Economies and Industries* 29, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. P. 69

### 1.2.5. The issue of Actorness:

Mathew Doidge (2007) made an extensive analysis of interregionalism and the conditionality of actorness involved. He stated: *"Interregionalism needs to be analyzed in the context of the roles and functions it performs (...) This acknowledgement of interregionalism as a distinct arena of interaction allows for a far more nuance consideration of interregional dialogue than traditionally has been the case."*<sup>31</sup>

Doidge based four criteria determining the degree of actorness:

- a. Presence- stipulating that a regional organization is visibly participating in international affairs and that it is recognized and thus accorded credibility by others (Allen and Smith 1998)
- b. Regional identity – is required and ought to include shared interests, norms and goals;
- c. Policy structures and processes – enabling a regional organization to take decisions;
- d. Ability to implement decisions (Bretherton and Vogler 1999, Doidge 2007)

Yet, in terms of actorness ASEM inter-regionalism has been somehow troublesome to categorize. Hanggi (2006) define inter-regionalism as interaction between two regional organizations (e.g. EU-ASEAN) or between a regional organization and a looser affiliated group (Asian ASEM).<sup>32</sup> Geans (2009) argued that through ASEM framework, the EU plays a role in constructing Asia as a region. Because of functioning as a regional grouping within ASEM, East Asia needs to consult internally, coordinate on diverse and sensitive issues and build consensus ahead of meetings with European counterparts, hence, new inter-regionalism contributes to the promotion of regionalism in East Asia<sup>33</sup>. This claim came from the perspective where ASEM is seen a mechanism of the EU's external policy.

On the other hand of actorness, Soderbaum and Van Langenhove (2005) underlined the inclusion of non-state actors from civil society or private sector in the process, bringing the

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<sup>31</sup> Doidge, "Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism." P. 231

<sup>32</sup> Hanggi, "Interregionalism: as a multifaceted phenomenon: in search for a typology."

<sup>33</sup> Geans, "Pitfalls and Potential of Region-to-Region Interaction in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)."

understanding of actorness to a different level.<sup>34</sup> The view on representation of actorness has been differentiated within the members as well. Some of European states hold the position that the EU's coordinating and representing role should not eclipse the intergovernmental aspect and individual members.

In 2002 Germany released a policy paper for East Asia, in which it stated: "*ASEM is a special form of inter-regional cooperation, since it is not the European Union, but its member states and the European Commission which each take part independently*". Furthermore, the expectations of each member states toward different aspects of cooperation also varies, hence the level of involvement in the process varies as well. For example, France, the UK and Germany place emphasis on the role of ASEM in Asia, partially for their pre-existing bilateral interests in the region. Spain, Denmark, Sweden and Greece prioritize human rights considerations in the dialogue<sup>35</sup>. The schism between group-to-group approach and intergovernmental approach has caused limitations for the ASEM process.

#### **1.2.6. Asia-Europe Meeting as a manifestation of Multilateralism**

Asia-Europe inter-regionalism can also be analyzed as an exercise of multilateralism. Christopher Dent claimed that "interregional frameworks like the ASEM are obliged to demonstrate their buttressing of multilateral institutions... when certain aspects of multilateral order are under threat from aggressive hegemonic unilateralism or 'blocist' regionalism, both of which can bring significant instability to the global system"<sup>36</sup>. Interregional institutions, such as ASEM, work as maintainer and strengthener to the multilateral stability by playing the functions of "*rational interfacing mechanisms between regional and multilateral orders*".<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Fredrik Soderbaum and Luk Van Langenhove, "Introduction: The EU as a global actor and the role of interregionalism," *European Integration* 27, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>35</sup> Geans, "Pitfalls and Potential of Region-to-Region Interaction in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)."

<sup>36</sup> Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-Regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility." P. 220

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. P. 221



ASEM has been studied as an exemplary of multilateralism. Bersick, Stokhof and van der Velde (2006)<sup>38</sup> in their book compiled many essays about Asian-European relations. The authors attempted to define multi-regionalism and multilateralism in the context of East Asia-EU relations, and to examine what are the driving forces behind these processes. Felicio's chapter continued the discussion about multi-regionalism, treating East Asia as the missing link. She gave interesting definition of *Vertical Multi-regionalism* as regional-global security mechanism, and *Horizontal Multi-regionalism* as Inter-regionalism of ASEM, and Multi-regionalism Cycle as Regional Domino Effect leading to the development of new processes of region-building.<sup>39</sup>

Individual cases of cooperation (the economic integration in EU style, India's Intra and inter-regional politics, Southeast Asian security in the case of Aceh, and Expanding China-EU relationship) drew attention to the institutionalisation of intra- and inter-regional relations in the global system. Analyses included material linkages (economic, political, and social) Asia-Europe relationship in post-Cold War development. Economic interchange is a central in discussion of Asian financial crisis, and the understanding of China's role. The main message from the contributors is to show how regional and global processes have pushed for region building in places of previously dominated state-to-state relations: "*Multilateralism may also play a role in the future as a device to mobilize support and legitimacy for unilateral actions.*"<sup>40</sup>

The utility of ASEM in terms of political values of cooperation and economic progress of trade flow between the continents are much discussed according to the mainstream international relations and international political economy theories. The body of literature mentioned earlier have extensively evaluated ASEM's contribution to global and regional governance. In terms of quantity, relatively little has been offered in terms of socio-cultural cooperation of ASEM.

Moving to the second perspective of this analysis; multilateralism is not unfamiliar to ASEAN either. In fact, ASEAN Way emphasizes multilateral interaction, in which high degree of discreteness, informality, pragmatism, expediency, consensus-building, and non-

<sup>38</sup> Sebastian Bersick, Wim Stokhof, and Paul van der Velde, *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism Asian-European Relations in a Global Context*, ed. Sebastian Bersick, Wim Stokhof, and Paul van der Velde (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Tania Felicio, "East Asia: The Missing Link in Multiregionalism," in *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism: Asian-European Relations in a Global Context* ed. Sebastian Bersick, Wim Stokhof, and Paul van der Velde (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Rüländ, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

confrontational bargaining styles.<sup>41</sup> The format of multilateral cooperation reflected in ASEM is another case. It becomes a compromise between the multilateral practices of ASEAN and European styles.

This dissertation shall discuss socialization process as an illustrated of the communication between the different forms of multilateral cooperation.

### **1.2.7. The socio-cultural dimensions of the dialogue:**

With the vast of academic interests in the ASEM process, paradoxically there is limited number of studies that would concentrate on the socio-cultural dimension of Asia-Europe dialogue. Most of existing analyses overview the multi-layered ASEM dimensions. Many were dedicated to the global economic governance and some on security cooperation.

However, the socio-cultural significance of ASEM process cannot be underestimated. Within publications concentrating on this dimension there are significant personal opinions of founding fathers of cultural pillar of ASEM, ASEF previous Director Generals (Yeo and Latif 2000, Colome 2001, 2008).<sup>42</sup> They laid out the vision and the spirit behind the process, as well as personal experience during the implementation process. The practice of socio-cultural cooperation has been handled by the ASEF, which also plays a role of knowledge dissemination, with a substantive number of post-event publications. All of those provide tangible cases for study. Yet, in academic analysis, the socio-cultural pillar has been somehow neglected, and that is why this study aims at filling in the gap.

From the social interaction point of view, ASEM as an exemplary of inter-regional dialogue plays an important function of representation. Lawson (2002, 2003) analysed the issue

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<sup>41</sup> Amitav Acharya, "Ideas, identity and institution-building: From the 'ASEAN Way' to the 'Asia-Pacific Way?'," *Pacific Review* 10, no. 3 (1997). P. 329

<sup>42</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo and Asad Latif, *Asia and Europe: Essays and Speeches by Tommy Koh* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing and ASEF, 2000). Delfin Colome, "The Asia Europe Foundation: Innovation and Challenge," *Panorama* 4(2001); Delfin Colome, *The Marco Polo Bridge: My Experiences as Executive Director of ASEF* (Singapore: ASEF and Fundacio CIDOB, 2008).



of cultural representativeness of a region as a key contributor for collective identity formation<sup>43</sup>. In case of Asia-Europe Meeting, as the name itself emphasizes, a meeting has an informal and a dialogue character. The meeting become to refer cultural concordance and cultural representation becomes a precondition of the meeting.

The requirement for understanding culture recurs throughout the ASEM documents. The distinct terms of “Asia” and “Europe” infer collective identities which precede the meeting and thus structure the differences between each of the participants in a binary order. When defining the participants for the purpose of dialogue, there is an assumption of difference that hinders the understanding, and therefore the need for the dialogue. The culture here serves as an instrumental function in organizing the agenda, becomes a structural repository for issues concerning the identity and interests of actors. Such identities and interests require cultural representation, and that involves “*internal functions of sovereign states, thus politics, democracy, civil society, human rights become by default cultural*”<sup>44</sup>.

Cultural representation in the Asia-Europe Meeting process does not function in the old sense of ideology, to mask or legitimate the true intentions of agents. ASEM rather, is a vivid example of how the organization of cultural representation produces a structure of relations that is necessary to accomplish the tasks of elite formation and reproduction by providing a field in which political elites can cooperate, a field of action beyond the given dictates of sovereignty in an international system. It provides a space for political action and elite formation through cultural representation. Cultural representation enables the identification, engagement, exchange and networking necessary for elite formation. It also enables an elite political process to be presented as *necessary*, not in the sense of expressing deep essential structures or identities, but in the context of globalization, in a practical political sense.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Lawson, "ASEM and the Politics of Regional Identity."; Lawson, *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*.

<sup>44</sup> Lawson, *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*. P.35

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* P. 37

In the debate of inter-regionalism, the understanding for “region” should be defined in the first place. Regions, here are not assumed to be natural, but rather “imaged communities”, which are created and recreated in the process of global transformations.<sup>46</sup>

At the social and cultural level, regional identity-building shapes the nature of regional cooperation. Positing “East Asia” next to “Europe” within the ASEM framework often leads to the conclusion that “Asia” is the ‘lesser developed’ region, as though the EU-model provides the end-goal”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the process of inter-regionalism within ASEM is important for the development of an East Asian identity, because it establishes at the outset a dominant regional European narrative alongside a weak regional collection of Asian states.<sup>48</sup>

The constructivism sees East Asian governments’ attempts to construct a regional identity vis-à-vis other regional communities, meaning the sense of a collective Asian identity is refined by participation in inter-regional framework. ASEM is contributing in helping to construct the notion of an East Asian region in a sense of “self-identification”. Constructivist approach incorporates ideas and interest as factors endogenous to interaction. In other words, interests for actors to come into an interaction are not exogenous; they are endogenously and inter-subjectively constituted. They are the result of constructing identities ascribed by them to others.<sup>49</sup> Thus, international relations are seen as cognitive process determined by previous experiences and interactions.

Interaction is understood as “*the stories that social actors tell and by which, in the process, they come to define themselves or to construct their identities and perceive conditions that promote and/or mitigate the possibility for future change*”.<sup>50</sup>

Institutions provide a forum, which “*consolidates group feelings when a group feels endangered by a common external threat or challenge*”<sup>51</sup>. Relations between Asia and Europe

<sup>46</sup> Hettne Bjorn and Fredrik Soderbaum, "Theorizing the Rise of Regionness," in *Third Annual Conference of the Centre for the Study of Globalization and Regionalism (CSGR), University of Warwick* (University of Warwick 1999).

<sup>47</sup> Gilson and Yeo, "Collective Identity-Building through Trans-regionalism." P.26

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. P.28

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> Christine B. N. Chin and James H. Mittelman., "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," *New Political Economy* 2, no. 1 (1997).

can be seen as a result of interactions, where actors construct their own identities in the process of self-recognition of sharing and adjusting lines or borders between Selves and Others (Gilson 2002, Hanggi 2003).<sup>52</sup>

On the socio-cultural dimension of discussion, the author distinguished two levels for analysis. The first one, above mentioned, includes some constructivist ideas about interaction social learning, and nurturing perceptions and identities. It treats culture as a subject of difference; hence the third pillar's cooperation is to bridge the divide. And bridging is necessary is to avoid phantom of Huntington's clash of civilizations.

However, socio-cultural pillar of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism has another function that goes beyond the understanding of culture itself. Bersick (2008), Geans (2008) and Keva (2008)<sup>53</sup> detect a trend of democratization of the process through ASEF initiatives. The Asia-Europe Foundation by involving variety of actors and individuals in their programs and exchanges, introduces (both intentionally and unintentionally) the ideas of participatory democracy and cultural democracy to the Asia-Europe process.

### 1.2.8. Summary of the existing literature

ASEM has been extensively examined from the EU's external relations point of view (Serradell 1996, Dent 1997, Foster 2000, Ruland 2000, Yepes 2005).<sup>54</sup> Individual countries'

<sup>51</sup> Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting*. P. 17

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Heiner Hanggi, "Regionalism through Inter-regionalism: East Asia and ASEM," in *Regionalism in East Asia: Paradigm Shifting*, ed. Fu-Kuo Liu and Philippe Regnier (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Sebastian Bersick, "'The democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: the role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments',," in *Asian-Europe Relations. Building blocks for global governance?*, ed. Jurgen Ruland, Gunter Schubert, Gunter Schucher and Cornelia Storz (New York: Routledge, 2008). Bart Geans, "ASEM as a Tool to Bridge the Cultural Divide," in *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*, ed. Bart Geans (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008); Silja Keva, "ASEM and Civil Society," in *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*, ed. Bart Gaens (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Victor Pou Serradell, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A Historical Turning Point in Relations between the Two Regions," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 2(1996); Christopher M. Dent, "The ASEM: Managing the new framework of the EU's economic relations with East Asia," *Pacific Affairs* 70, no. 4 (1997); Anthony Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach," *Journal of European Public Policy* 7, no. 5 (2000); Ruland, *Asia-Europe Cooperation - The ASEM process: A European View*; Cesar Deprado Yepes, "The Effect of ASEM on European Foreign Policies," *Asia Europe Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005).

perspectives were also offered, namely China (Bersick 2004)<sup>55</sup>, Japan (Gilson 1999)<sup>56</sup>, and South Korea (Camroux and Park 2004)<sup>57</sup>. Given fundamental role that ASEAN has played in forming ASEM, little can be found on Southeast Asian perspectives. Tommy Koh, the Singaporean Ambassador-At-Large, who was the founding director of ASEM spoke about ASEAN's hopes from a practitioner's point of view (Koh 1998).<sup>58</sup> McMahon 1998 and Yang 2001 offered an academic analysis of ASEAN's role in the early stages in ASEM.<sup>59</sup> They both concentrate on the strategic objectives and conditions of the 1990s reality for ASEAN and ASEM. No studies have been committed to examine ASEAN's expectations, role and position in ASEM in all levels of cooperation since.

To synthesize the above literature review the author suggests a categorization into a format of the following table:

Table 4: Summary of literature review: Asia-Europe inter-regionalism

Dimensions	Theoretical approach	Empirical analysis
	authors and main concepts	authors and main concepts
<b>IR mainstream</b>	<p>Gilson 2002, Dent 2003, Hanggi 2006, Ruland 2006, Ruland 2006, Schubert, Schucher and Storz 2008, Robles 2008,</p> <p>Inter-regionalism as group-to-group interaction. There are five major functions of inter-regional fora, of</p>	<p>Yeo 2003, Dent 2005, Reiterer 2005, Camroux 2006, 2008, Maull &amp; Okfen 2006, Loewen 2007, Geans 2008</p> <p>Criticism over the ineffectiveness of ASEM arose with its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary when a wave of publications appeared to look back at the process. Particularly</p>

<sup>55</sup> Sebastian Bersick, "China and ASEM: Strengthening Multilateralism through Inter-regionalism," in *The Eurasian Space: Far more than Two Continents*, ed. Wim Stokhof, Paul van der Velde, and Yeo Lay Hwee (Singapore and Leiden: Institution of Southeast Asian Studies and International Institute for Asian Studies, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> Julie Gilson, "Japan's role in the Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an inter-regional and intra-regional agenda," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 5 (1999).

<sup>57</sup> David Camroux and Sunghee Park, "Korea and ASEM," in *The Eurasian Space: Far more than Two Continents*, ed. Wim Stokhof, Paul van der Velde, and Yeo Lay Hwee (Singapore and Leiden: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and International Institute for Asian Studies, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Tommy Koh, "ASEAN and the Asia Europe Meeting " in *ASEAN Towards 2020: Strategic Goals and Future Directions*, ed. Stephen Leong (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> Joseph A. McMahon, "ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting: strengthening the European Union's relationship with Southeast Asia," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 3(1998); Seung-yoon Yang, "The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEAN's Policy Toward ASEM," *EAST ASIAN REVIEW* 13, no. 4 (2001).

	<p>which, depending from analysing perspectives, theorists put emphasis on different ones.</p> <p>(1) Viewed by realists, inter-regionalism main role is balancing power. (2) Liberal institutionalism puts emphasis on institution-building, rationalizing and agenda-setting. Institutionalists angle stresses the density of institutional layer in the international system and the socializing role of multilateralism. (3) Constructivists consider identity-building as the major contribution of inter-regional cooperation, where Self learn about itself by learning about the Other.</p>	<p>severe disapproval concerned the inaction towards the Asian financial crisis. ASEM could not escape the fate of being constantly compared, and laid expectations over, when APEC's performance was far from impressing. Empirical studies over the ASEM Summits and Ministerial Meetings concluded with the following limitations:</p> <p>(1) structural weakness and lack of legally binding instruments; (2) crisis of security-related and trade multilateralism; (3) coexistence of two different cooperation cultures; (4) tensions between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism as the modus operandi.</p>
<b>Socio-cultural Interaction</b>	<p>Lawson 2002, 2003, Gilson and Yeo 2004</p> <p>Lawson is one of few analysts who pay entire attention to the cultural aspects of ASEM summitry. Unlike Gilson and Yeo, who also discuss the identity-building from constructivist approach from international studies, Lawson's analysis concentrates on cultural representation of a region. Culture becomes of central priority, as cultural representation enables the identification, engagement, exchange and networking necessary for elite formation. Institutions are seen as providers of venue for interaction between the actors, where they can express their cognitive awareness.</p>	<p>Yeo and Latif 2000, Colome 2001, 2008, Zhang 2007, Keva 2008, Bersick 2008</p> <p>ASEM's success is initiating "soft security" sphere (Dialogue among Cultures and Civilization and the Interfaith Dialogue), which has fostered knowledge-based dialogues. The important contribution of the third pillar is inception of democratization trend within the inter-regional dialogue. Apart from celebrating culture as a value and indispensable element of comprehensive development for people in Asia and Europe it is also a means for pluralising the dialogue. Including variety of actors (academic, intellectuals, artists, cultural practitioners, religious groups, and youth) into the process, Asia-Europe meetings gains on cultural democracy level.</p>

Source: Author's own research

As shown from this literature review, ASEM has been analysed through the lenses of traditional International Relations theories. A vast amount of governance-oriented research has been focusing on the performance and abilities of ASEM. However, little attention has been given to the organizations true potential which lies outside of traditional concepts of governance.

ASEM is an idealistic organization in its vision and purpose of existence. Therefore, it is important to consider the cognitive aspects of that idealistic organization, aspects that go beyond the rationalist reasoning and institutional building. My analysis focuses on the ideational aspects of cognitive and perceptual attitude towards regionalism.

This research's contribution is on two levels. Firstly, it fills in the insufficiency of socio-cultural evaluation of the Asia-Europe inter-regional cooperation. It adopts cross-disciplinary approach to look at the functions and contributions of cultural cooperation in the international relations, more specifically, inter-regional relation. Secondly, it provides an updated study from ASEAN's perspective on the role and potentials that this regional institution has in ASEM. The lenses through which analysis is conducted are elaborated in the following chapter "Concepts of analysis".

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **2.1. Analytical Framework**

This research investigates the reason why the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) sustains process despite the criticism. The main research question posed is: What is the value of ASEM? In examining that puzzle it focuses on the under-explored values of ASEM's third pillar of cultural cooperation. It argues that ASEM can work beyond what is traditionally perceived in International Relations mainstream theories as functional purpose.

##### **2.1.1. Research questions**

The main research question is divided on several supportive questions that are analyzed in various chapters of this study. The deliberation of this analysis deconstructs the research question into supportive questions:

1. What are the factors determining ASEM's limits?
2. What are the factors determining ASEM's accomplishment?
3. Who is the key actor in ASEM development?
4. How Asia-Europe inter-regionalism is going to be affected by the changing position of ASEAN?

The answer for the question one is in chapter Three and chapter Four. Chapter Three "Historical development and Institutional arrangements" answers the first question giving the circumstances, reasons and the process and establishment of ASEM. It states the need of cooperation and the factors that have pushed the two regions together. It also explains the hesitation behind and the tangible benefits that broke "the ice". Chapter Three also shows the institutional setting and the how they were negotiated, conditioned by historical, cultural and political reasons.



Chapter Three also by the analogy of development and institutional arrangements shows the link between ASEAN and ASEM, hence addresses also the questions number three about the key actor in the ASEM process.

Chapter Four explains the cultural background of cooperation explaining the norms behind the organization and leads to the question number two. In this chapter I show how cultural and normative differences affect the nature and effectiveness of ASEM inter-regional cooperation. The argument of this chapter is that the gap between Asia and Europe that ASEM has been trying to bridge lies in the cognitive distance. The case study over the issue of human rights depicts the conflicting perspectives. Differences are then reflected in the process of creating a sense of identity and belonging.

Chapter Three and Four address the inter-regional and regional levels on analysis. The concepts of “regions” and regional identity (Asian in particular) as well as sub-regional – ASEAN representation are analyzed. Chapter Six brings the same levels into discussion of the changes that have occurred. Chapter Five moves to second two levels of member governments and civil society levels.

To answer question two, chapter five treats about the achievements of ASEM. Particularly it focuses on under-researched third pillar and argues that it is the cultural cooperation that has brought the most meaningful contribution to the Asia-Europe relations. In this chapter the achievements and accomplishments are assessed on different levels: level of member states, but most of all this dissertation focuses on the level of civil society.

Chapter Six answers to the question three about the current changes and transformations of actors involved in ASEM process as well as ASEM itself. It explains how ASEM has transformed since the inception and what can be its role now? Who is the driver of the change for ASEM?

Chapter Seven answers to questions four by offering a comprehensive evaluation of the organization including the accomplishments and limitations and explains the role of norms and values against the interests and benefits. It proves that traditional International Relations theories do not include the aspects of expectation related to perception, attitude and cognitive factors.

In assessing ASEM, this study is an enquiry into the continued existence of ASEM as an inter-regional partnership forum between two regions, namely Asia and Europe, and intends to present the perspective from ASEM Asian part. The innovation of this ASEM assessment is taking the perspective of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

### **2.1.2. Working hypotheses**

The significance of this thesis derives from several considerations. First, its significance lies in its originality as it uses a broad range of interviews as the main source of data to support the arguments. No other study has had such a comprehensive empirical base on this topic. Interviewees' come from a broad background: diplomats, scholars, journalists, business people, artists, cultural practitioners, academics, NGO activists etc. The interpretive methods are adopted to analyze the interview data in their context as I am aware of the differences in the profiles of interviewees as well as the interviewer.

Secondly, the region-to-region, rather than country-to-country relations are distinctive and new practice in IR that requires an understanding of its merit and limitations. ASEM is the first international forum that has created such group-to-group circumstances. Moreover, it excludes the US, creating other significant meanings of ASEM next to politico-strategic, economic and cultural perspectives.

Thirdly, this thesis employs working hypotheses to probe different dimensions of the engagement that ASEAN have with ASEM.

H1. Cultural factors affecting cooperation cultures and institutional norms determined the low effectiveness of the organization.

I argue that the gap between Asia and Europe affecting the cooperation in inter-regional forum is mainly cognitive and perceptual rather than geo-strategic. In fact, the divergence of the expectations from Asia and Europe towards ASEM are also related to the cognitive perceptions, determined by the cultural, historical and psychological sense of distance.

On the inter-regional level, this argument sees interaction and socialization as a form of self-realization, learning about oneself through the differentiating from the other. This cognitive process of recognizing the differences consolidate the “self”. ASEM offers an exposure to the “Other” and that cognition process contributes to the creation of regional identity. In ASEM setting, with binary juxtaposing of “Asia” and “Europe”, there is a push for stronger group feeling.

H2. These cultural factors are at the same time the biggest contribution that ASEM has brought to the inter-regional cooperation.

The argumentation is that because of previous lack of cooperation on cultural ground, the ASEM innovative agenda has brought into the picture of international politics the value of cultural, educational and people to people have particular value for the regional and inter-regional cooperation. Through cultural agenda various actors have been included in the inter-regional process creating, what I call, “pluralization of actors” and the change of perception on various levels, not only on the political elites.

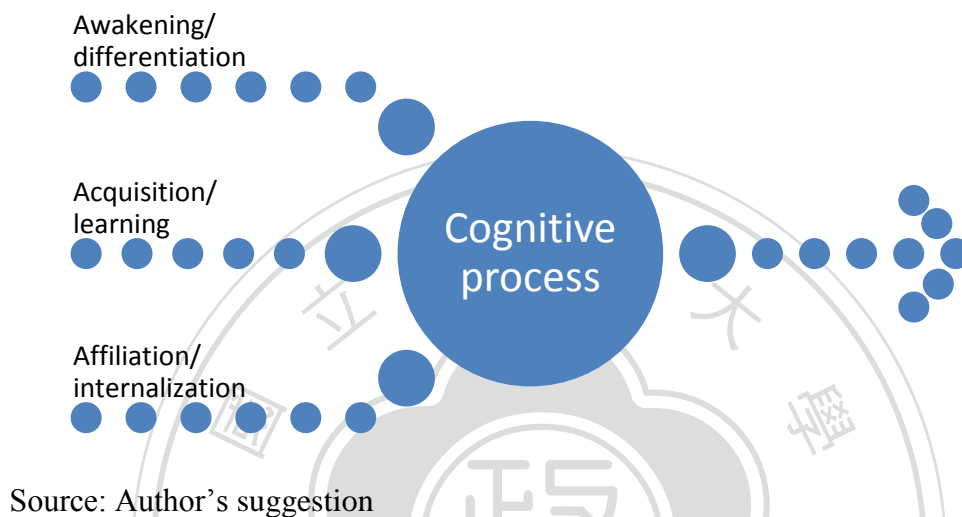
Moreover, this argumentation underlines the role of interaction as a process of cognitive change and reflection that then lead to the sense of awareness of the region. This hypothesis sees contribution of “regionalism through inter-regionalism” and process of creating regional identity in a constructive affiliation through learning, understanding developing sense of familiarity, unlike the first hypothesis which is based on negative affiliation with the “other”.

Both of these argumentations are based on the cognitive aspects. The first one relates to the initial stage of cognition process is awakening, and tends to focus more on the differences. The second phase tends to have the acquisition and acceptance component that would lead to understanding. The final phase is developed on the sense of familiarity leading to acceptance and affiliation.

This study argues that the final stage has not been reached as yet, the gap remains. It is a long process of “winning hearts and minds” to finally reach the affiliation and affirmation of the cognitive and perceptual levels of regionalism. This research argues, however, that ASEM’s

main contribution has been building the bridge and allowing awakening and acquisition to happen so far.

Graph 2: Levels of cognitive process



H3. Unlike the prevailing literature that focuses on the EU's role, this dissertation argues that it is ASEAN that has played key role in forming ASEM.

ASEM has gone through the process of institutional learning from ASEAN. Despite to conflicting cultures of cooperation present with ASEM due to diversity of actors, ASEAN and ASEAN Way and norms have been playing decisive role. Hence, weaknesses of ASEM are also a reflection of limits that ASEAN faces. Shallow institutionalism, informality, low effectiveness, and prevalence of rhetorical declaration are common to both ASEAN and ASEM. Although the EU has played more active role both in terms of agenda setting and financial support, the course of ASEM's development and its effectiveness is more dependent on the pace and direction of ASEAN's development.

#### H4. ASEM development is correlated to the ASEAN's direction.

The dynamics of ASEAN has deciding impact on further development of ASEM. Deepening institutionalization of ASEAN, as well as commitment to regionalism and multilateralism will determine whether ASEM sustain the importance. ASEAN and its transformation of norms will act as actor of change for ASEM. Depending on the ASEAN's direction on further institutionalization and revising its ASEAN Way that would also transform the working methods of ASEM. The orientation of ASEAN as an institution would determine the ASEM as an institution as well.

ASEM, reversely also has impact on the defining the regions and has utility for reinforcing ASEAN's collective identity. Given the recognition it has within ASEM group, ASEAN can seek reinforcement of centrality within it. The EU's current crisis can help to enhance ASEAN's position in it. ASEAN can leverage increased interest of the EU towards Asian region and the Asian markets and leverage ASEM platform to enhance its profile.

Each of these hypotheses are analyzed as a dimension through which this thesis seeks guidance from the literature that deals with the three perspectives of International Relations. The inductive approach is emphasized as the research takes advantage of the richness of the interview data.

This is comprehensive analysis where ASEM is examined both from an active actor and as a passive outcome of cooperation process. The distinctive feature of this study is that different theoretical lenses are employed in the diverse analytical frameworks the intention is not to pursue some elusive notion of paradigmatic unity but simply to bring the most useful analytical apparatus to the particular issues at hand. Thus, this study represents a more holistic approach to examine a phenomenon in International Relations.

## **2.2. Conceptual framework**

### **2.2.1. Levels of analysis**

The utility of ASEM is examined on several levels:

1. Inter-regional level:

Creating “regions” by identity formation

Regional representation

Solidarity of ASEAN in the context of East Asian

2. Sub-regional level:

ASEAN as potential “leader”

Benefits and interests for ASEAN in ASEM

“Selling” ASEAN’s norms to wider public

3. Member’s level:

Member governments’ utility

Benefits and interests of single member states in participating in ASEM

4. Actors/ interest groups level:

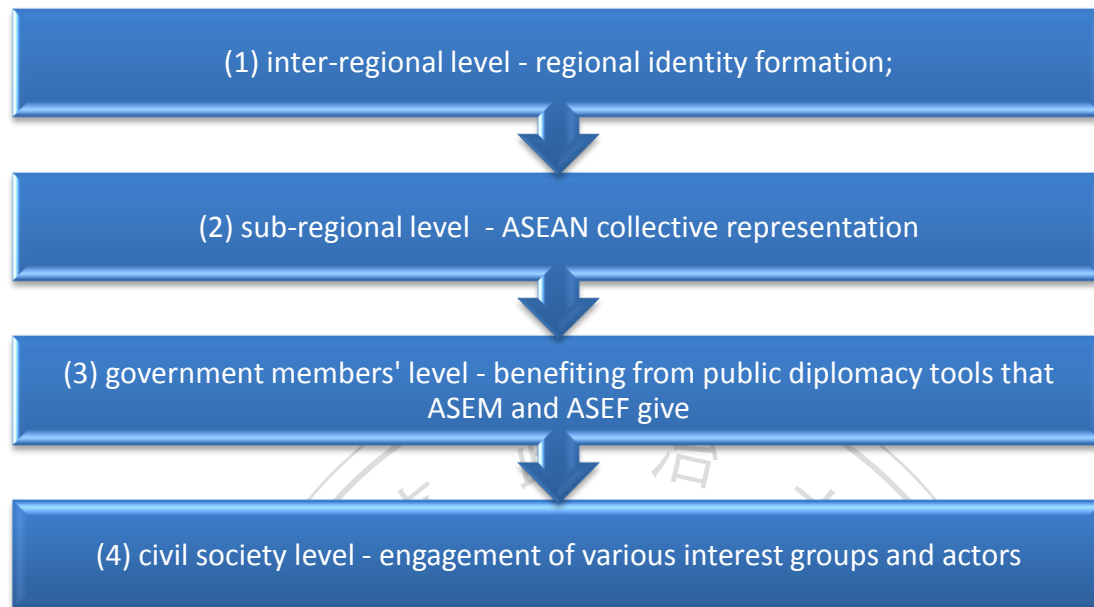
Inclusiveness of civil society

Bottom-up regionalism

Pluralization of actors

These levels are addressed in each of the analytical chapters. The following is the visualization:

Graph 3: Levels of analysis



Source: Author's analysis

This study examines the value and contribution of the ASEM process and assesses its accomplishment and shortcomings. It focuses on under-explored aspects beyond traditional consideration of International Relations studies. It argues that ASEM has played an essential role in “cognitive regionalism” through cultural cooperation and the exchange of ideas. This dissertation uses the richness of interviews data to provide broad-based insights into the cognitive process of ASEM forums, into the pursuit of foreign policy advantage in the ASEM process, and into the flexibility of ASEM’s informal institution.

Previous studies of ASEM have mainly emphasized the apparent ‘ineffectiveness’ and ‘obsolete role’ of the forum, but how ASEM is perceived by the people who are involved, directly or indirectly, has not been investigated thoroughly, in particular from the Southeast Asian perspectives.

This study contributes to the literature on ASEM and ASEAN regional institutions by providing a comprehensive understanding of ASEM based on 3 different dimensions: regional identity building, role of culture in international cooperation, and ASEAN’s socializing



mechanism. This dissertation adds to the study of the impact of external forces, namely the EU, on the development of regional awareness in Asia by exploring the cognitive experience and inter-subjective understanding among participants in the ASEM process.

In arguing about the utility and contributions of ASEM in cultural cooperation, this study is not defender of ASEM. The purpose of this analysis is to test the ASEM's claims and declaration against the evidences and give an evidence-based assessment of the Asia-Europe Meeting.

ASEM should be evaluated, as an international organization, on the criteria it sets for itself, rather than basing on the criteria or institutional success imposed by the EU. Not all institutions work on the criteria of hard law and legally-binding outcomes. For example, what are the criteria that can speak for the success of an organization outside of the EU criteria? Can ASEM, bridging between ASEAN Way and EU Way be of success from either point of view?

ASEM does not have functional cooperation purpose, such as APEC does. Rather, it serves as the forum for dialoguing. Is dialoguing still important? Many scholars would rather see ASEM as another APEC, with focused functional purpose: There is a need for functional purpose for ASEM: "If ASEM is able to develop a more concentrated form of functional cooperation, just like APEC, then it can remain its relevance."<sup>60</sup>

However, I argue that there is a need for other type of yardstick to measure the utility of ASEM. It is not in terms of functional governance, as majority of observers conclude. In such reasoning I adopt the concepts of socializing, communicating ideas and exchanging experiences. In short, ASEM is seen here as a platform for mutual learning.

### **2.2.2. Socializing is mimicking each other**

Learning can go wrong in numerous ways. Social networks, epistemic communities and international organization not only constitute channels allowing for the quick transmittal of ideas and knowledge, they sometimes artificially create demands for policies or act as teachers of

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Prof. Peter Drysdale, Canberra, March 2013.

norms, mitigating against rational learning. At other times actors adopt policies or institutions because they want to become more like their role models. Sociological explanations argue that actors mimic each other because this confers legitimacy. Actors are less concerned about the efficiency of a policy innovation but celebrate its symbolic value of belonging to a community.

Anja Jetsche in “Do Regional Organizations Travel?” argued about the diffusion of regionalism and how ASEAN learnt from the EU. Diffusion approaches in general try to explain the special spread of institutions, rules and practices over time. Diffusion is the process through which specific practices and institutions spread through social channels of communication. It is also a phenomenon characterized by interdependent decision-making in which the time of adoption matters. The adoption of specific policies or institutions increases the likelihood of adoption of these institutions by other actors. Diffusion is a social view of international relations, assuming that actors observe each other’s actions and decision and act accordingly.<sup>61</sup>

According to Robert Keohane, all international institutions have common causes – the functional demand for information, rules and arbitration, but vary as a function of the nature of cooperation problems. Coordination and collaboration problems require different institutional design: coordination problems elicit institutions that provide decision rules, whereas cooperation problems foster institutions that provide strong monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.<sup>62</sup>

Social interaction inside institutions is assumed to have no effect on the ‘identities’ or ‘interest’ of actors, or at least institutionalists are divided as to whether there are any effects. That is actors emerge from interaction inside institutions with the same attributes, traits, and characteristics with which they entered. These characteristics in turn have no effect on the attribute, traits or characteristics of the institutions itself- an efficient institution reflects the nature of the cooperation problem not the nature of the actors themselves – and these characteristics, in turn, have no impact on actor identities.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Anja Jetschke, "Institutionalizing ASEAN: celebrating Europe through network governance," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 3 (2009). P. 2

<sup>62</sup> Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

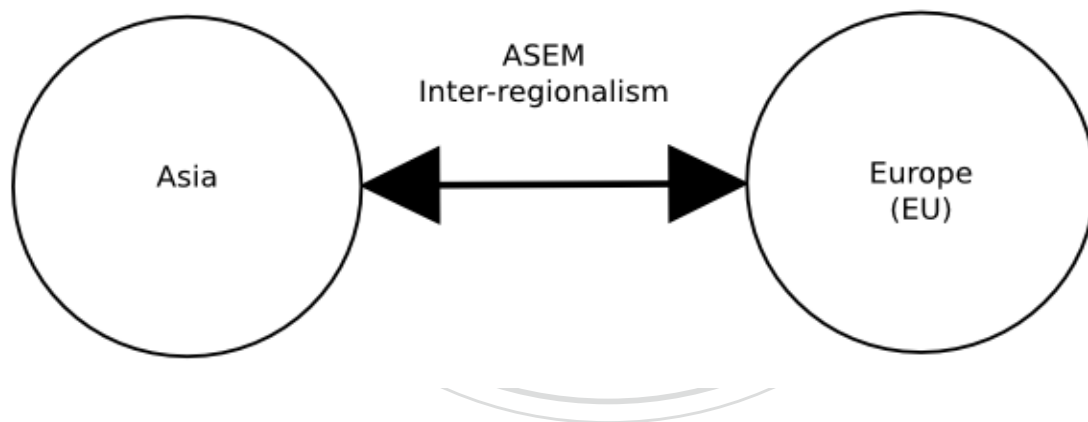
<sup>63</sup> Alastair Ian Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory," in *International Relations Theory and the Asia Pacific*, ed. John Ikenberry and Michale Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). P. 111

Turning to the literature of international relations, the cultural dimension of interaction is programmatically neglected by most members of the dominant school of ‘Realists’ – the contemporary positivists in the field of international relations (Waltz, 1979). However, an ‘English school’ of International Relations critical of the Realists has provided a set of conceptual bridgeheads towards anthropology by debating to what extent an international system presupposes cultural continuity in order to function (although they do not use these terms).<sup>64</sup>

Adopting double theoretical lenses is justified by the paradigm that socialization is indeed essential on the elite level. *“Cultural brokerage, at this level seen as interaction between elites, may be studied in a number of ways (...) Elite socialization provides for a certain cultural continuity across national boundaries.”*<sup>65</sup>

In the context of ASEM in this analysis the meetings and the meaning of socialization can be depicted as following:

Graph 4: ASEM as a bridge between the regions



Source: Author's analysis

At the beginning of the process, ASEM was envisioned simply as a bridge between “Asia” and “Europe”. The definition of what is “Asia” and what is “Europe” entitled to the membership of ASEM creates debates that are addressed in the chapter four on regional identity. ASEM was

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Iver B. Neumann, "International Relations as a Cultural System: An Agenda for Research," *Cooperation and Conflict* 28, no. 3 (1993). P. 240

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. P. 247

to serve as a means providing the venue for dialogue. The very notion of dialogue on regular basis, rather than ad-hoc meeting to address a certain issue, was new for both sides. Hence, the initial stage can be seen as a process of learning how to dialogue with one another, but also within one's group.

With the time, there process of dialoguing became natural, and internal consultations before the meeting became the unspoken rule. Each side had a coordinator on rotation basis from the member countries that takes up the role of "spokesperson" representing the group.

While the European side has had Brussels to handle the procedures, on the Asian side – there are no such equivalent multilateral apparatus. Instead, there is informal negotiation and consultations going on. The European side, until recently equivalent to EU, had Permanent Coordinator in the person of European Commission, and a European Coordinator on rotational basis. On the Asian side, the division is between one of ASEAN partners next to one of Northeast and South Asian coordinator.

Whether ASEAN succeeded or failed in socialization, can be assessed in different ways. Recognizing ASEAN's socialization strategy as reflecting rhetorical requires a clear understanding and consensus on what constitutes good behavior against which the behavior of others can be judged. At the core of such understanding is the clarity that is both developed and displayed by ensuring different parts of an organization convey the same message to targets, so that the manner is coherent. Socializing agent must ensure that pressure for reform is consistent across the range of activities where agent and target interact. In particular case of ASEAN and Myanmar, the messages were contradictory and incoherent. ASEAN deployed rhetorical action weakly because the member states used ASEAN to simultaneously chastise and support Myanmar.<sup>66</sup>

Using ASEAN socialization model, I argue that in ASEM interaction allows "Changing minds" by learning, eliminating prejudices, anticipation and understanding the other actors, either inter-regional or intra-regional. Participating in ASEM can influence the change the behavior of states (not ASEM itself – because it has no argumentation itself, but because it is

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<sup>66</sup> Mathew Davies, "The Perils of Incoherence: ASEAN, Myanmar and the Avoidable Failures of Human Rights Socialization?," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 34, no. 1 (2012). P. 12

able to draw attention and commitment together, created an atmosphere of learning, absorbing and adopting).

Learning goes beyond the regional identity context. ASEM as a mechanism is a sense is a learning outcome of the experience of ASEAN institutionalism. The modules of cooperation are learnt from the process that ASEAN has gone through in a different context earlier. It no immune to the influence of the European experiences as well. Therefore, I argue that ASEM is a product of interaction, socialization of different cooperation cultures.

The socialization theory says that interaction, non-coercive diplomacy of “changing minds”, can in fact change the preferences and interests.

### **2.2.3. Social environments of international organizations**

Keohane argued, international organizations have acquired state-like features in that they issue binding rules and also sanctions if rules are not acted upon. “Although they do not perform a full range of state functions, they do shape politics globally, regionally and locally.”<sup>67</sup> And institutions are legitimate when their right to make collectively binding decisions is acknowledged by their policy addresses.

Institutions, like Checkel argued, are defined as an established and persistent pattern of behaviour, and they are constructed through social interaction, in addition to formal political structures of rules, norms, beliefs and values, routines and conventions.<sup>68</sup>

Mario Telo said that “institutions are interesting because they change the behaviour of states: they are the rules of the game that permit, prescribe, or prohibit certain actions and by doing so they inevitably raise the challenge of democratic legitimacy.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Juha Jokela and Bart Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 10 (2012). P. 146

<sup>68</sup> Jeffrey Checkel, "Social construction and European integration," in *The Social Construction of Europe*, ed. Thomas Christiansen, Knud Eric Jorgensen, and Antje Wiener (London: Sage, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> Mario Telo, "Introduction: Globalization, new regionalism and the role of the European Union," in *European Union and New Regionalism: Regional actors and Global Governance in post-hegemonic era*, ed. Mario Telo (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007). P. 16

*“Inter-regional interaction relates to transparency or openness in deliberative procedures, as well as to democratic credentials or accountability of institutions with policy making and policy-shaping ambitions.”*<sup>70</sup>

Based on the above theoretical frameworks, this study argues that ASEM should an inter-regional institution, and have some features of decision/rule makers as well. But why it hasn't been a case? What are the limits of ASEM effectiveness?

Gaens and Jokela also argued that ASEM reflected the “European objectives of taking part in the swiftly growing East Asian economies, but more importantly, it expressed EU ambitions to play a greater global political role. The perceived weakness of the Asia-Europe link in the tripolar economic world order was the declared aim of the Asian participants in ASEM.”<sup>71</sup>

As ASEM develops, its scope broadens but the effectiveness of it remains limited. A range of questions follows on the legitimacy of ASEM's existence: Why states are still eager to join. What value does ASEM still represent for them? Purely socializing forum? Is it diluted by expanding membership? Or does that mean that the ASEM values and norms are commonly acceptable across the spectrum of such diverse members? How such different countries can cooperate? How can they agree on any norms or values? Or is the weak effectiveness the result of diversity of members? Does informality equal lack of accountability? Gaens and Jokela argue that because everything is behind closed doors, absence of negotiations or decision making process complicate the transparency and democratic accountability.<sup>72</sup>

ASEM is ineffective because of the pillar-structure. The pillarization separates the groups and there is little connection among the sectors. And because of that limited connection, there is little room for feedback from the grassroots to the leadership. Hence ASEM is a limited legitimacy forum, because of limited transparency. But as this study discovers, ASEM is moving from pillar-structure to issue-oriented. This is the contribution from ASEM's years of experience. Such orientation has been recognized as added-valued of ASEM.

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<sup>70</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 152

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. P.152

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. P. 153

Robles in 2008 argued that the peoples on the receiving end are excluded from the ASEM process. The political agenda of the Asian countries and economic agenda of European countries have prevented representatives of NGOs and civil society, gathering in the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF), from receiving a voice in the process.<sup>73</sup>

*"Based on the principle of issue-based leadership, groups of partner states from the European and Asian regions invest and take part jointly in initiatives and projects based on their own interests and priorities."*<sup>74</sup>

ASEM is seen as a social environment, a testing ground for innovations, ideas and exchanges. It is seen as a platform for communicating, hence socializing:

*"In the context of global governance, interregional forums may serve as platforms or arenas for great powers, regional organizations or coalitions of states to highlight and frame new global problems that need to be tackled by the international community".*<sup>75</sup>

#### **2.2.4. Concepts of social constructivism**

To justify the combination of concepts, with main component of constructivist, this research is based on, it refers to the nature of ASEM and ASEAN cooperation. Many criticisms of ASEAN pointed the lack of applied evidence. Hence, Kawasaki described ASEAN as "romantic and intellectually naïve".<sup>76</sup> To a certain degree, I agree to this opinion seeing ASEAN, not as much as ASEM, an idealistic in its nature and purpose as an organization.

This study adds on the argumentation on the existing debate of constructivists that help to undermine the rationalist myth, maintained by neo-realists and neo-liberals alike, about international anarchy as given. Constructivists also show how regions and regional identities

<sup>73</sup> Robles Jr., *The Asia-Europe Meeting. The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism*. P. 35

<sup>74</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 153

<sup>75</sup> Rüländ, "Balancers, Multilateral utilities or global identity builders? International Relations and the study of Interregionalism ". P. 1277

<sup>76</sup> Quoted from: Amitav Acharya and Richard Snubbs, "Theorizing Southeast Asian relations: An Introduction," *Pacific Review* 19, no. 2 (2006). P. 130



come about. Thanks to constructivism, we are able to see how state and norms work to produce anarchy, regions and/or states.<sup>77</sup>

Social constructivists put emphasis on persuasion. “Persuasion and shaming or social opprobrium (often termed normative ‘pressure’) are conflated. “Persuasion involves the noncoercive communication of normative understandings that is internalized by actors such that new courses of action are viewed as entirely reasonable and appropriate. Social pressure, opprobrium – also termed social influence – is different. The actor desires to maximize social status and image as ends in themselves. This leads to sensitivity to the accumulation of status makers that are bestowed only by a relevant audience with which the actor has at least a modicum of identification.”<sup>78</sup>

For social constructivists socialization is a central concept. The constructivists’ focus on the ‘logic of appropriateness’ – pro-norm behaviour that is so deeply internalized as to be unquestioned, automatic, and taken-for-granted – naturally motivates questions about which norms are internalized by agents, how and to what degree.”<sup>79</sup>

The social influence means the actor does not change beliefs, but change behaviour – “public conformity without private acceptance”<sup>80</sup> happens in response to social pressures. There exists an inter-subjective normative consensus about what good behaviour is. There exists a forum making actions public – institutional environment to display what others are doing and evaluate it.

This theory only to certain degree fits to the ASEM context. ASEM, as it shall be explained further in this study, is a forum of dialoguing and learning, but with a principle of equality, where “no blame game” or moralization is strictly adhered to. Hence the idea of purpose of socialization through persuasion or having a clear model to learn from is not exactly adequate. Socialization here is seen as willingness and an opportunity of learning.

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<sup>77</sup> See Seng Tan, "Rescuing constructivism from the constructivists: A critical reading of constructivist interventions in Southeast Asian security," *Pacific Review* 19, no. 2 (2006). P. 255

<sup>78</sup> Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory." P. 114

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. P. 113

<sup>80</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

### 2.2.5. Epistemic community as an effect of socialization

Peter Haas (1992) offered arguably most cited definition of epistemic community.<sup>81</sup> He came to that definition by posing questions: What shape decision makers behaviour, when they are not familiar with technical aspects? Under conditions of uncertainty what are the origins of international institutions? What are the relations between the state behaviour, what are the systematic conditions and domestic pressure imposed?

Haas defined epistemic communities as the networks of knowledge-based experts, who play in articulating the cause-and-effect relationship of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiations.

Holzer and Marx (1979), whereas, defined epistemic communities as networks of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-areas.<sup>82</sup>

Haas argued that control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of new ideas and information can lead to new patterns of behaviour and prove to be an important determinant of international policy coordination.<sup>83</sup>

Although an epistemic community may consist of professionals from variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they have:

(1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members;

(2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes;

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<sup>81</sup> Peter M. Haas, "Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (1992).

<sup>82</sup> Burkart Holzner and John H. Marx, *Knowledge application: the knowledge system in society* (Allyn and Bacon, 1979).

<sup>83</sup> Haas, "Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination." P. 2-3

(3) shared notions of validity – that is, inter-subjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and

(4) a common policy enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out to the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.

The role of epistemic communities in the epistemic policy coordination is based on major dynamics: uncertainty, interpretation, and institutionalization. In international policy coordination, the forms of uncertainty that tend to stimulate demands for information are those which arise from the strong dependence of states on each other's policy choices for success in obtaining goals and those which involve multiple and only partly estimable consequences of action.

*“Epistemic communities are one possible provider of this sort of information and advice. (...) The members of a prevailing community become strong actors at the national and transnational level as decision makers solicit their information and delegate responsibility to them”.*<sup>84</sup>

That logic drove him to the conclusion that Members of transnational epistemic communities can influence state interests either by directly identifying them for decision makers or by illuminating the salient dimensions of an issue from which the decision makers may then deduce their interests. The decision makers in one state may, in turn, influence the interests and behaviour of other states, thereby increasing the likelihood of convergent state behaviour and international policy coordination, informed by the causal beliefs and policy preferences of the epistemic community. Similarly, epistemic communities may contribute to the creation and maintenance of social institutions that guide international behaviour.

Haas offered a non-systemic approach by focusing on the various ways in which new ideas and information are diffused and taken into account by decision makers, where epistemic communities plays an important role in state interests and identifies a dynamic for persistent cooperation independent of the distribution of international power. It assumes that state actors

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. P. 4

are uncertainty reducers as well as power and wealth pursuers. And uncertainty is explained two-folds:

First, in the face of uncertainty, and more so in the wake of a shock or crisis, many of the conditions facilitating a focus on power are absent. (...) And second, poorly understood conditions may create enough turbulence that established operating procedures may break down, making institutions unworkable.<sup>85</sup>

Under conditions of uncertainty, then decision makers have a variety of incentives and reasons for consulting epistemic communities, some of them more politically motivated than others. First, following a shock or crisis, epistemic communities can elucidate the cause-and-effect relationship and provide advice about the likely results of various courses of action. Second, epistemic communities can shed light on the nature of the complex inter-linkages between issues and on the chain of events that might proceed either from failure to take action or from instituting a particular policy. Third, epistemic communities can help define the self-interests of a state or factions within it.

The process of elucidating the cause-and-effect relationships of problems can in fact lead to the redefinition of preconceived interests or to the identification of new interests. Fourth, epistemic communities can help formulate policies. Their role in this regard will depend on the reasons for which their advice is sought. In some cases, decision makers will seek advice to gain information which will justify or legitimate a policy that they wish to pursue for political ends.<sup>86</sup>

Having that said, epistemic communities serve as channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country. In other words, decision makers are most likely to turn to epistemic communities under conditions of uncertainty. While their goal is ostensibly to obtain “knowledge” that will ameliorate the uncertainty and give them some handle on the “reality” or “truth” of the situation at hand, the specialists called upon for advice bring with them their interpretations of the knowledge, which are in turn based on their causally informed vision of reality and their notions of validity.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. P. 14

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. P. 15

Summarizing, epistemic communities have exerted their influence on decision makers in a wide variety of issue-areas. Generally called upon for advice under conditions of uncertainty, they have often proved to be significant actors in shaping patterns of international policy coordination<sup>87</sup>.

The concept of epistemic community explains the contribution from ASEM building networks of experts through ASEF activities. The very habit of knowledge sharing, creating the connection of people who can advance knowledge by sharing best practices has been incorporated in the main purpose of the ASEM bridging function. It is, however, the character of the meetings and the scope of individuals involved have semi-structured character. Some of the participants attend of repetitive basis, but the aim is to include a wider range of people. This limits the chance of creating an epistemic community, which by default expect a degree of continuity. Hence, it can only be applied to certain degree in this analysis.

#### **2.2.6. Original contribution of this study: concept of “Cognitive regionalism”**

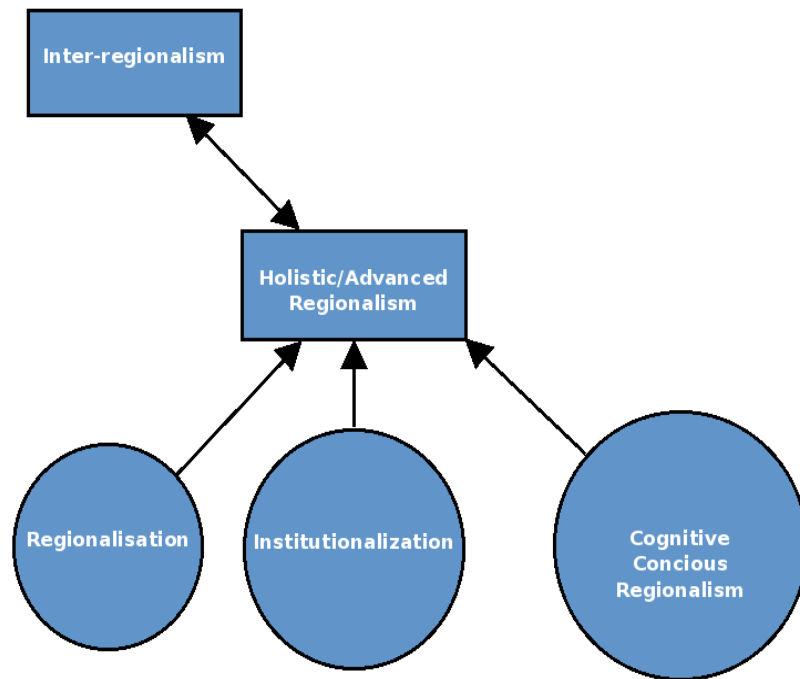
All above mentioned concepts encompass the elements of understanding, learning through interaction, communication and socialization, acquisition of new elements and sharing the knowledge possessed. They have a common denominator of cognitive.

At the core of this study there lies a paradigm that existing explanation of regionalism and inter-regionalism process neglect the essential, and arguably the most advanced level of it – the cognitive level of regionalism. I call it “cognitive”/ conscious regionalism”. Next to essential regionalization processes, multilateral cooperation, and institutionalization with “legalization” of such cooperation, there is a need of a buy-in on the perception and identification level by the actors involved. I argue that without that element, regional and inter-regional cooperation cannot be advanced and they remain shallow processes. I argue that this would create a mature and advanced regionalism process.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. P. 35

Graph 5: Effective/matured inter-regionalism and regionalism

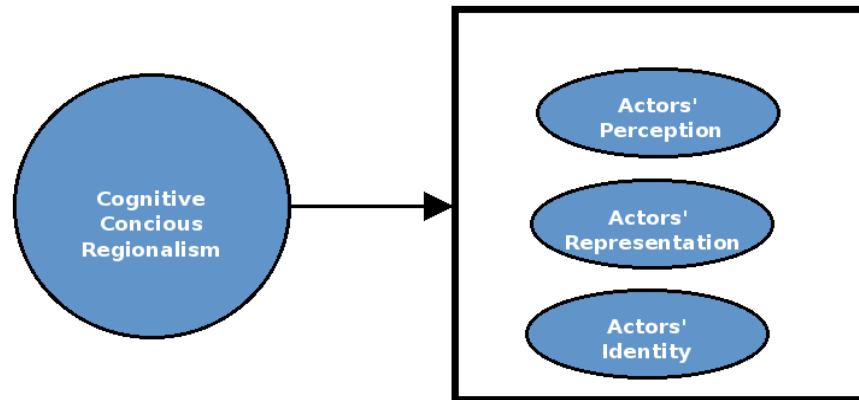


Source: Author's suggestions

Moreover cognitive regional process reinforces actors' identifies and perception that would determine the success of inter-regional cooperation Development of regions' identity is essential because it reinforces and reaffirms the actor's reorientation, and that legitimizes their role in the process of regionalism and inter-regionalism respectively.

This is ideational model that is yet to be reached. This study suggests the pathway of development leading to that expected outcome of a conscious process of regionalism and inter-regionalism that includes the cognitive and perceptual factors. A regionalism that is able to win hearts and mind and reaffirms a solid regional identity.

Graph 6: Identity and actorness



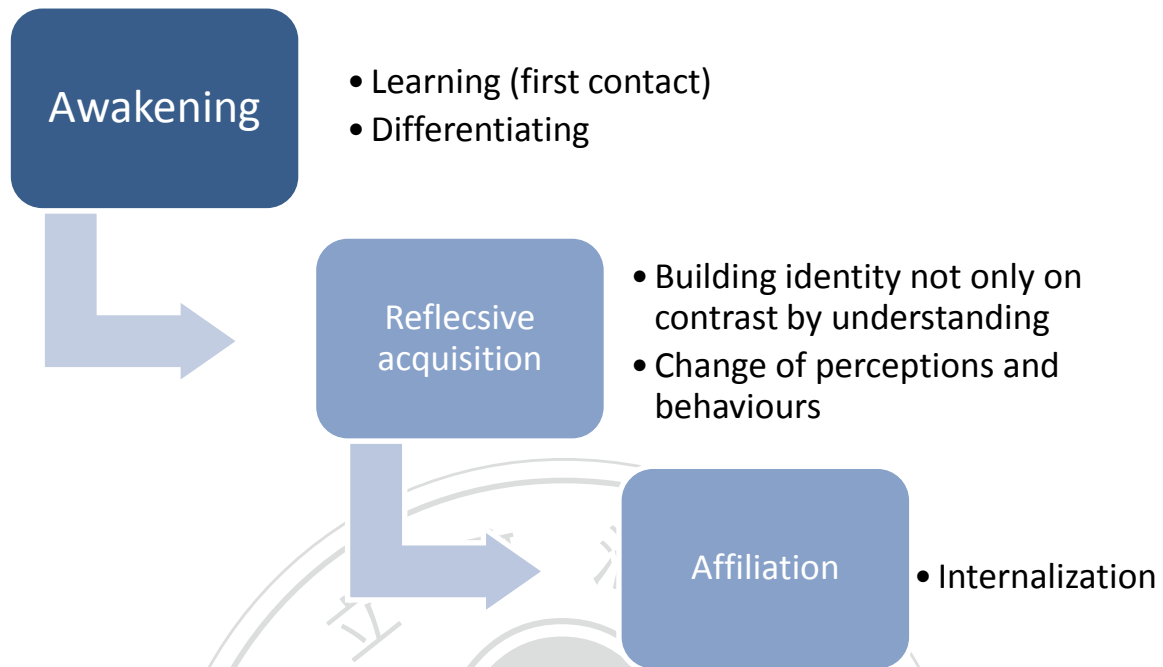
Source: Author's suggestion

Cognitivism is also related to psychological development. In the traditional psychology of socialization as a process of cognition the following elements of representation, conception and perception related to the influence of the external world have impact.

Cognitive regionalism here refers to a conscious process of regional cooperation that includes learning and understanding aspects of culture and norms of cooperation and developing regional identity. It happens through processes of learning and socialization.

Graph 7: Cognitive process





Source: Author's suggestions

I argue that a successful process of regionalism is a conscious process, where actors involved are conscious. It is achieved by (1) awakening and differentiating from the other actor and building own identity, (2) reflexive acquisition of socialized ideas and perception leading to the change of perception and behaviours and (3) gone through affiliation to understanding and internalization. ASEM is a platform allowing that cognitive regionalism to happen thanks to bringing together diverse actors and by the binary concept of different regions.

### 2.3. Methodology

According to King, Keohane and Verba, qualitative research in social science should eventually 'frame inference, causal or descriptive, quantitative or qualitative.'<sup>88</sup> This research offers several explanations that are closer to a qualitative and descriptive inferences than causal one. Descriptive inference is 'the process of understanding an unobserved phenomenon on the

<sup>88</sup> Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Methods* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994). P. 34

basis of a set of observations'.<sup>89</sup> To construct descriptive inferences, this research employs qualitative methods that include historical, inductive and interpretive approaches etc.

### **2.3.1. Methods applied**

The majority of existing analyses on Asia-Europe inter-regionalism and ASEAN-EU bi-regionalism are based on historical and theoretical approaches. This study's contribution is to offer a combined methodology of theoretical literature review and empirical research based on in-depth interviews with policy makers involved in the problem. It includes static and solid theoretical understanding and compare to the newest dynamic and policy developments of ASEM and ASEAN.

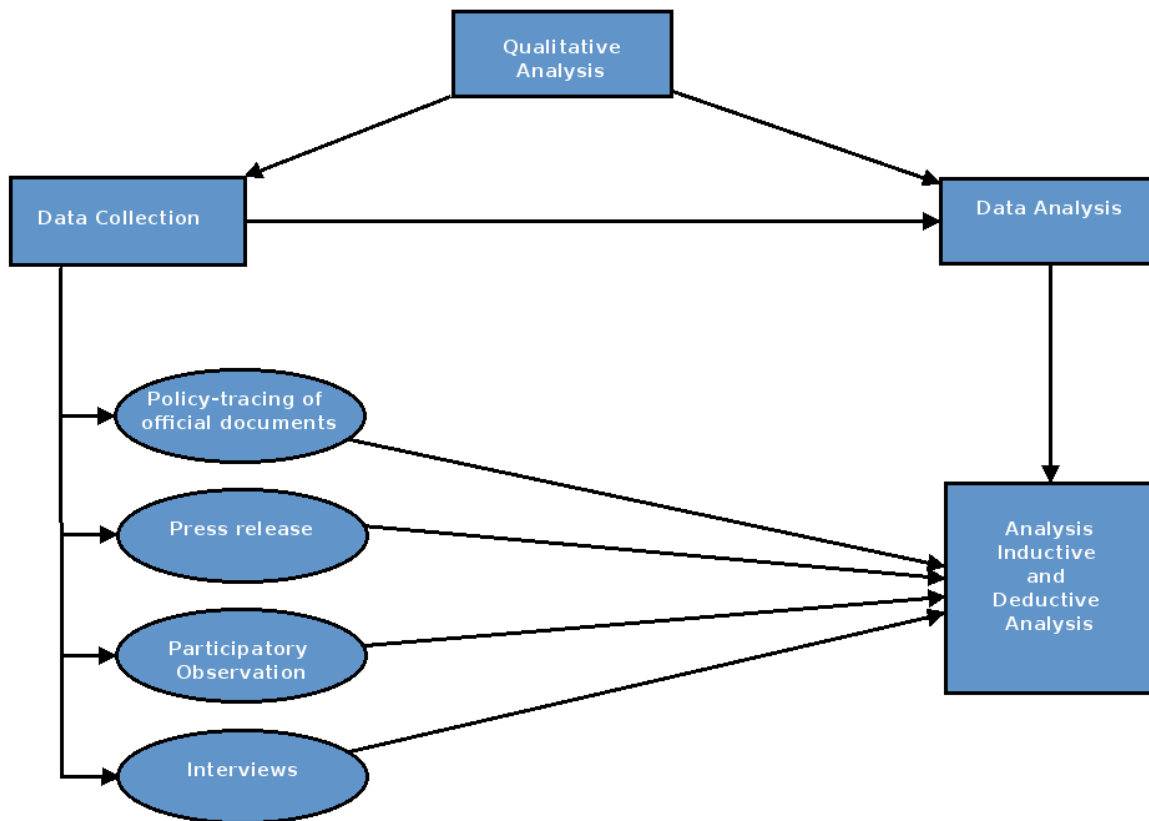
The aim of such synthesis is to bring a balanced view on the problem from comparing both approaches. Studies are made over official documents and statements of ASEM, ASEF and ASEAN, as well as academic publications related to the topic. Empirical research composes of active participation and active observation, in-depth interviews with ASEM and ASEAN policy-creators, ASEF program coordinators, and participants from ASEAN countries.

Explanation of methodology that the author employed can be illustrated as the following:

Graph 8: Methodology employed

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. P. 55



Source: Author's suggestion

This study is based on first-hand and second-hand materials: analysis of official statements and documents, and academic research materials; and interviews with relevant policy-makers, academics, and ASEAN participants. It adopts a deductive analysis. The second-hand materials are consisted of literature review of the publications about Asia-Europe inter-regionalism and the development of ASEM mechanism.

Because majority of the existing resources heavily concentrates on the economic ties and political-security cooperation, this part is tackled in this study as secondary focus. Instead, it focuses on limited materials that talk about such issues as education, civil society participation or emerging democratization of the inter-regional process. Attention is paid to ASEAN

development of Socio-Cultural Community, this including official ASEAN documents such as ASEAN Charter, the Blueprint for ASSC, ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and publication analysing the current trend of ASEAN shift. Those materials are relatively new, only after adopting the Charter in 2008; hence official press releases from ASEAN governments are also taken into consideration.

To analyse the process of Asia-Europe cultural cooperation and its influence on ASEAN's internal change, a comparison of certain programs and policy documents over the years need to be done. It will analyse the ASEM Summits, ASEM Ministers' Meetings.

The analysis official rhetoric analysis is to examine whether there occurs an inter-change through value and idea transmit. It will also retrieve the ASEF and ASEM's archives materials and statistics in order to gain a full picture of ASEAN participation in the programs. The second part of analysis is the empirical study where the author analyses the in-depth interviews with decision-makers of ASEM and ASEAN she conducted throughout the period of four years. Further elaboration of empirical data collection is in the following section.

### **2.3.2. Organization of empirical data**

This dissertation was written in eight countries, over three continents, using resources of Taiwan (IIR NCCU), Singapore (ISEAS, ASEF, and Centre for European Studies Singapore), Malaysia (UM, Asia-Europe Institute and ISIS Malaysia), Indonesia (ASEAN Secretariat, LIPI), Vietnam (The Vietnamese Diplomatic Academy), Poland (Institute for Foreign Affairs), Belgium (UNU CRIS) and Australia (Australian National University, the College of Asia and the Pacific and the ANU Center for European Studies, Sydney University, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies).

Extensive field research trips were conducted over the period of five years of examining the complex issues related to ASEAN Community building, comparative approaches to regionalism, and ASEM developments.

Due to limited financial support, I had to utilize my personal networks established through my experience working as diplomatic interpreter to access the government representatives and parliamentarians from countries of interests. I also made use of academic links that I have established through international conference participation. Thanks to participation and presentation at the prestigious international research community I gained valuable input to my research. I also managed to establish connection enabling me for further field research.

I have conducted initial research before settling the proposal. Apart from attending to a number of essential to her research international conferences and networks, she has conducted a few initial field research trips. The author utilized her professional experience of working for many years as diplomatic interpreter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China to access the senior officials. Receiving delegations from Poland and from the EC, she had chances to interview the officials and diplomats working for the European Parliament.

Interviews with civil society, students and academics were conducted on various occasions of participatory observation to many ASEM and ASEF activities, research fellowships and international conferences over the course of five years. Field work trips were made to Singapore and Jakarta on repetitive basis. Interviews were conducted in English, Chinese, Vietnamese and Polish languages.

The theoretical analysis were contributed by arguably the most resourceful library and publishing house in Southeast Asia – the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore, which I visited in 2009. In 2011 I was based at the Asia-Europe Institute Resource Center, University of Malaya for a six-week research fellowship.

The visiting research fellowship at Australian National University offered me a great opportunity to work with world renowned experts in both Asian and European studies, being based at College of Asia Pacific and the Centre for European Studies. The rigid research environment at ANU directed me towards the empirical-oriented research.

The following list of selected interviewees who had agreed upon revealing their identities.

**a. First track:**

As a part of participatory research I attended a number of programs organized by ASEF, cooperated with the Foundation in consultancy projects, as well as made a field trip to Asia-Europe Foundation in December 2009.

A number of interviews with ASEF staff, including:

- Director General Ambassador Dominique Girard in 2008 and 2010;
- Deputy Director General Ambassador Nguyen Quoc Khanh 2009,
- Key staff personas: Sabina Santosa – Director of Culture Exchange Department, Sol Iglesias – Director of Intellectual Exchange Department, Leonie NAGARAJAN Chief of Staff to the Executive Director, Katelijn Versteate – Program Executive Culture Exchange Department;

From the EU perspective:

- EU Chief Representative in Malaysia, Alexandro Paolicchi
- Prof. Michael Reiterer – based at the moment at University of Innsburg, diplomat, long-time member of European External Action Service, Counselor for the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM);
- A number of officials from the European Parliament and the EU External Action Services (EEAS);

From ASEAN side important interviews were conducted with two former ASEAN Secretary General and the former Deputy General.

- Rodolfo Severino (April 2010);
- Ong Keng Yong (January 2012);
- Dato' Ahmand Mokhtar Selat – former Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN;

**b. Second track:**

The author has been consulting her research with the most acclaimed authors in the field and had continuous and extensive talks with them.

From the EU-ASEAN perspective:

- Prof. Yeo Lay Hwee, Director of EU Center in Singapore, lecturer at National Singapore University, the author of the most publications about ASEM;
- Prof. David Camroux, based at French Sciences Po, the author of most stimulating articles about ASEAN-EU relations; analyst of EU external policy;
- Prof. Werner Pascha, based at German University of Duisburg-Essen, editor of Journal of Asia-Europe Relations;
- Prof. Toshiro Tanaka, Jean Monet Professor, Former Director of EU Center in Japan, Prof. Emeritus of Keio University;

### **c. From ASEAN perspectives**

The author had a brief research fellowship at Asia-Europe Institute based at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur and consulted with scholars and previous practitioners:

- Prof. MD Nasrudin MD Akhir – Executive Director of Asia-Europe Institute
- Prof. Azmi Mat Akhir – Deputy Executive Director (academic), cum- Senior Research Fellow of ASEAN Network (served previously 20 years in ASEAN)
- Dr. Jay Wysocki, Center for Dialogue of Civilization, University of Malaya
- Prof. Hanafi Hussin – Art and culture, Director of Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Malaya
- Dr. Tang Siew Mun – Director of Foreign Policy and Security Studies Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia (Track 1,5)
- Prof. Carolina G. Hernandez – based at University of the Philippines, Founding President and Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, member of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN ISIS) that provides policy inputs to the ASEAN processes, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) in relation to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation (CAEC) in relation to the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).
- Prof. Chin Kin Wah – Deputy Director of Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore;
- Ralf Emmers from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore
- Noel Morada, R2P Center, University of Queensland



**d. Field research was conducted in:**

1. ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta:
  - Use of ASEAN resource center
  - Interview ASEAN staff and experts:
    - o Keo Chhea – Senior Officer, ASEAN External Relations Division ASEAN-EU
    - o ARD Nora'in Ali – Culture and Information Division, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
    - o Mega Irena – Women and Social Issues Division, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
    - o Ryan Rahardjo – ASEM, ASEAN External Relations Division ASEAN-EU
    - o Budidharmo P. Kuntjoro Jakti – Education, and Training Division
    - o Prof. Mely Anthony – Director of ASEAN External Relations Division
    - o Dr. Larry Maramis - Director of the Cross-Sectoral Cooperation Directorate
2. ASEF:
  - Re-visit (this stage is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary preparation)
  - New interviews: with the founding director of ASEF – Amb. Tommy Koh, previous directors, management and staff, seconded and employed staff.
3. EU External Action Services:
  - Officials met on various occasions in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Hanoi, Vienna and Brussels.

**2.1.5. Summary of interviewees' profiles**

To summarize the interviewees, I suggest the format of tables, quantifying the profile and nationality of them as following.

Due to lack of consent of other interviewees on disclosing their identities, the remaining list of interviewees is not provided.

Table 5: Profile of interviewees

Nationality/ group	Government officials and diplomats	ASEAN staff	EC staff	ASEF staff	Academic	Journalist	Civil society	Students	
Australia	2			1	10		3	6	
Austria	1		1						
Belgium	2		3	1					
Cambodia		2							
China (and Hong Kong)				2	4	2		4	
Denmark			1						
France			2	1	2		2		
Germany	3		2	1	5			8	
Holland				1					
Indonesia	2	4			4			4	
India				2			2		
Italy							2		
Ireland				1					
Japan	2				1				
Korea				1					
Malaysia	2	2			8	2	2	2	
Myanmar	1	1							
New Zealand					2				
Philippines		4		3	4				
Poland	6			1	2				
Romania									
Singapore	2	1		5	4			3	
Thailand					2	1	1		
Vietnam	5	1		1	3	2			
Total	28	15	9	21	51	7	12	27	170

Source: Author's research

Over the course of five years, the total number of interviews conducted reached 170 people. Above is a summary of profiles and nationalities of people interviewed. The nature of interviews however, should be divided into two groups.

Group one was structured in-depth interviews on the policies and development of ASEM, ASEF and ASEAN. The total number of in-depth interviews was with the government officials, ASEAN staff, ASEF staff and EC staff. Each of the in-depth interviews lasted for 30 minutes to 1.5 hour. With some interviewees the author conducted multiple interviews with time space of two years in between. The total number of these interviews was 82.

Extensive interviews and consultations were conducted with the academics and scholars. Most of interviews with civil society and students were semi-structured and mostly regarded issues of perception and regional identity.

Table 6: Primary Interviews

	<b>position</b>	<b>department</b>	<b>nationality</b>	<b>time</b>
1	Executive Director		France	30min
2	Deputy Executive Director		Vietnam	60 min
3	Director	Cultural Exchange (CE)	Italy	30 min
4	Project Executive	CE	Belgium	120 min
5		People to People (P2P)	Romania	45 min
6		CE	India	90 min
7		IE	Singapore	30 min
8	Chief of Staff	Executive Office	Germany	60 min
Total				465 min (7.75h)

Time conducted: 2010

Table 7: Interview with ASEF staff by nationality

	Singapore	Philippines	Vietnam	China	India	Poland	France	Italy	Germany	Ireland	Holland	Belgium	Australia	Total
Diplomats	1	1	1	1	1			1						5
Staff	2	2			1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	13
Total	3	3	1		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18

Time conducted June 2012

Table 8: Interviews with ASEF

	position	department	nationality	time
1	Executive Director		France	20 min
2	Deputy Executive Director		Vietnam	60 min
3	Director	Intellectual Exchange (IE)	Philippines	80 min
4		Public Affairs (PA)	Singapore	50 min
5		People to People (P2P)	China	90 min
6	Deputy Director	IE	Singapore	100 min
7		Cultural Exchange (CE)	Belgium	80 min
8	Project Executive	CE	Italy	45 min
9		CE	Australia	45 min
10		IE	Poland	60 min
11		IE	Ireland	45 min
12		IE	India	60 min
13		P2P	Philippines	50 min
14		P2P	Holland	50 min
15		P2P	Singapore	45 min
		PA	Philippines	60 min
16	Assistant to Executive Office		China	90 min
17	Chief of staff		Germany	120 min
18	TOTAL: 18			1150 min (19.2h)

Time conducted: June 2012

Table 9: Interviews with former ASEAN Secretary Generals

Names	Position	Place	Date	Time
Dato Ahmand Mokhtar Selat	Previous Deputy Secretary of ASEAN	Kuala Lumpur	Dec. 2011	60 min
Prof. Azmi Mat Ahir	Previous Deputy Secretary of ASEAN	Kuala Lumpur	Nov. 2011	90 min
Rodolfo Severino	Previous Secretary General of ASEAN	Taipei	Apr-10	50 min
Ong Keng Yong	Previous Secretary General of ASEAN	Kuala Lumpur	Jan-12	20 min
Surin Pitsuwan	Secretary General ASEAN	Kuala Lumpur	Nov-11	120 min

Time conducted: Various

Table 10: Interviews with ASEAN

1	Director of External Relations I	Cambodia	50 min
2	Officer External Relations I	Vietnam	60 min
3	Officer External Relations I	Indonesia	60 min
4	Officer External Relations II	Philippines	120 min
5	Socio-Cultural Community	Indonesia	70 min
6	ASEAN Foundation	Indonesia	20 min
7	Cross-Sectoral Cooperation	Indonesia	90 min
8	ASEAN - ADB	Malaysia	20 min
9	ASEAN Commission on Women and Children	Indonesia	80 min
10	ASEAN Committee on Women and Children	Malaysia	60 min

Time conducted July 2012



**PART TWO: DEVELOPMENT OF ASEM AND ASEAN**



## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

This chapter provides background information for the studied subjects. It gives historical settings how ASEAN developed, and how ASEAN-EU relations resulted in creation of ASEM. This dissertation studies the cultural dimension of the relationship; this part outlines the pre-existing conditions that established both intra-ASEAN development, as well as inter-regional ASEAN-EU relations. Therefore, it focuses on the political environment – predominantly the leading factor – that generated the creation of ASEAN and ASEM. It explains the difficulties for Asia, in particular ASEAN, because it was the only established partner for the EU at that moment, and Europe as regions to have a smooth cooperation without perceptual, cultural and cognitive conflicts.

This chapter focuses on the transition from sub-regional level of analysis (ASEAN representation) to the inter-regional level – creating the ASEM.

sub-regional level - ASEAN collective representation

The analysis is organized in the parallel structure, examining processes occurring in intra-regional settings of ASEAN, with mirrored study frame on the inter-regional relations of ASEAN-EU, which later led to the establishment of a new form of relationship: the inter-regional dialogue manifested by the Asia-Europe Meeting.

The outline of historical conditions is followed by an explanation of the nature of the ASEAN and ASEM. Institutional arrangement, organizational development and working format are also presented in the parallel structure. As the description shows, the nature of cooperation and working style reflect the influence of political settings and motivations that brought the



organization to life. Socio-cultural norms are translated into legal-rational principles creating the ASEAN Way. The ASEAN Way not only functioned within Southeast Asia, but later has been “exported” to the inter-regional framework of Asia-Europe dialogue. Even this political analysis of the ASEM origin is not free from cultural context. This part shows the predominant influence of ASEAN in ASEM in terms of institutional behaviour.

The last part of this chapter addresses specifically the focus of this study – the socio-cultural pillar of both institutions. The third pillars of both institutions are described by the arrangements of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and Asia-Europe Foundation respectively. Although they function on different levels, and unlike ASEF, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is in creation, there are similarities in terms of scope and mission of the both third pillars. This part leads to in-depth analysis of the socio-cultural cooperation in the following section of this dissertation. This descriptive chapter is summarized by the comparative categorization of institutional arrangements that are common in both intra-regional ASEAN and inter-regional ASEM.

### **3.1. ASEAN then**

This part consists of historical development of ASEAN, The analysis adopts the time-frame dividing the process into discernible stages. It explains the origin and transformation of the Association determined by the political conditions of the Cold War, post-Cold War environment, Asian financial crisis, up to most current stage of Asian regionalism. It is followed by a summary of ASEAN-EU relations with the focus on the regions’ interaction within the ASEM context. The establishment of the Asia-Europe Meeting has been preceded by the evolution on ASEAN-EU ties; hence this analysis reaches back to origins of the creation of inter-regional dialogue. Although the historical ties have long legacy of colonialism, this study focuses on the contemporary East-West encounter. It explains the main motives for the two regions to establish formal relationship. Global and regional political conditions of the Cold War and new order after the end of it deeply influenced the relations between ASEAN and EU.

### 3.1.1. ASEAN Intra-regional development: ASEAN's origins

“ASEAN was born in the most unpromising circumstances”<sup>90</sup> – said the previous Secretary General of ASEAN, Rodolfo Severino.

The *raison d'être* for establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was to protect each member state's sovereignty. Those unpromising circumstances refer to the Cold War conflicts which battle-fields took place in the region and were upsetting stability of whole region. In addition to Chinese hostile attitude towards Southeast Asian states and the existing border issues among the newly independent, post-colonial states created a general insecurity atmosphere. In such conditions, forming a collective body to manage disputes and preventing from escalation into further conflicts seemed to be the only wise choice.

The regional cooperation and regional stability would also allow the members to dissipate mutual suspicion and focus more on advancing national development. There were some earlier initiatives towards forming blocks within Southeast Asian, such as the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) among Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand since 1961, and MAPHILINDO of Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia since 1963. ASEAN replaced MAPHILINDO and ASA bringing all five countries into one table. Moreover, from the beginning it explicitly pronounced its membership as open to all Southeast Asian nations. ASEAN was to “*bridge the gaps of ignorance and alienation between them. It was also to keep Southeast Asia from being an arena for the quarrels of the strong*”.<sup>91</sup>

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1967 in Bangkok five representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines signed ASEAN Declaration, also known as Bangkok Declaration, bringing into life the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Seven aims and purposes were stated:

- Economic growth, social progress and cultural development;
- Regional peace and stability;
- Economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative collaboration;

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<sup>90</sup>Rodolfo Severino and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies., *ASEAN, Southeast Asia background series* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008). P. 3

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. P. 5

- Mutual assistance in training and research;
- Collaboration in agriculture and industry, trade, transportation and communications, and the improvement of living standards;
- Promotion of Southeast Asian studies; and
- Cooperation with regional and international organizations.<sup>92</sup>

Cultural and social collaboration, as well a social progress and cultural development were listed among the first rationales for the organization's mission. Yet, as later the development of ASEAN shows, security, economic, and trade occupied the priority agenda. Despite its declared objective to be a vehicle for regional social and cultural cooperation, "*ASEAN has been prisoner of intra-ASEAN political problems and, then, of geopolitical developments in the region*".<sup>93</sup> External political conditions have made security agenda imperatives for ASEAN's activity, turning it in its early stage to a grouping of anti-communist states.

### **3.1.2. The five phases of ASEAN development**

Noel M. Morada suggested the four-period divide in analyzing of ASEAN's history<sup>94</sup>. I suggest adding the fifth – most current phase that marks significant transformation in ASEAN's personality.

#### **3.1.2.1. The formative phase (1967-1977)**

This period was marked by the signing of the "landmark" document of ASEAN – the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) signed on February 24<sup>th</sup> 1976. The TAC is a representation of norms that the founding members attached priority to:

- Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;

<sup>92</sup> ASEAN, "Bangkok Declaration," (Bangkok 1967). Available online: <http://www.asean.org/1212.htm> (last retrieved on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

<sup>93</sup> Hadi Soesastro, "ASEAN in 2030: the Long View," in *Reinventing ASEAN*, ed. Jesus P. Estanislao Simon S. C. Tay, Hadi Soesastro (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001). P. 281-282

<sup>94</sup> Noel M. Morada, "ASEAN at 40: Prospects for Community Building in Southeast Asia," *Asia-Pacific Review* 15, no. 1 (2008).

- The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force;
- Effective cooperation among themselves.<sup>95</sup>

As mentioned earlier, facing the looming Cold War threats ASEAN was seen as a strategic move; it also served as a major vehicle to manage territorial conflicts among the member states that allowed them to focus on nation-building and national development.

*“ASEAN thus provided the environment for regional resilience that enabled member countries to pursue national resilience”*.<sup>96</sup>

ASEAN at that time was regarded as a bulwark against Communism, encouraged by Japan and the United States and European countries. Although they formed the Association, the member states had not solved the territorial disputes with one another; hence ASEAN acted essentially as a confidence-building mechanism.

Internally speaking, all the members had different reasons for wanting an effective regional organization. Indonesia sought to repair its relations in the region and ASEAN could serve as an opportunity to exercise regional leadership. Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines saw ASEAN as a way to constrain Jakarta's aspirations. All of nations were still suspicious about each other, so ASEAN, apart from enhancing national prestige, was seen as a mean to restrain each other's intentions. Thailand hoped that ASEAN would become the basis for the “collective political defence” of the region, forming an organization that could supplement and perhaps eventually replace its own security relationship with the United States.<sup>97</sup>

As a result of security concerns, the members accomplished the Declaration on a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), signed in November 27<sup>th</sup> 1971 in Kuala Lumpur.

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<sup>95</sup> Art. 2 of the ASEAN, "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia," (1976)., available online: <http://www.aseansec.org/TAC-KnowledgeKit.pdf> (last retrieved on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

<sup>96</sup> Morada, "ASEAN at 40: Prospects for Community Building in Southeast Asia." P. 37

<sup>97</sup> Shaun Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002). P. 15

The Declaration was a broad statement of intentions that in fact imposed no legal obligations on its signatories. It stated: (1) Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, South East Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers; (2) South East Asian countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and close relationship<sup>98</sup>. As a matter of fact, ZOPFAN was evaluated as “*ASEAN’s most prominent and important diplomatic accomplishment before 1975*”.<sup>99</sup>

### 3.1.2.2. The second phase (1977-1987)

This phase was named conflict phase because the organization engaged into tussle with Vietnam following the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict.

This phase remained largely a period of consolidation as a political community in the case of external security challenges, notwithstanding the louder statements on promoting and initiating economic cooperation activities. ASEAN was indirectly involved into the armed confrontation between Vietnam and Cambodian Khmer Rouge, but took diplomatic position in the UN while opposed to the Vietnamese-installed government in Phnom Penh. Vietnam and its history played a significant role for shaping the region, as for almost a decade, the situation in Vietnam preoccupied ASEAN’s institutional activities.

The US withdrawal from Vietnam left “*a power vacuum in Southeast Asia that the Soviet Union and Chinese tried to fill*”<sup>100</sup>. The border conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea turned into Hanoi’s offensive to cut back Pol Pot’s hostile practices, and later escalated to China’s intervention punishing Vietnamese wilfulness. All those incidents had tremendous impact on the Association. Under the pressure of Thailand, who was the most directly threatened by the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict, ASEAN responded to the incident disapprovingly. With China threatening entrance in the picture, Indonesia and Malaysia supported ASEAN’s collective

<sup>98</sup> ASEAN, “Zone of Peace and Neutrality Declaration, ,” (Kuala Lumpur 1971). November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1971, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Text available online: <http://www.aseansec.org/1215.htm> (last retrieved on Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P. 22

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. P.43.

decision. It was for the first time that ASEAN<sup>101</sup> spoke with one voice in the international forum and made its appearance as a significant international and regional actor. Many consider the reaction as a high-water mark in the organization's diplomatic history showing-off intra-ASEAN unity.

In terms of economic development the following factors had impact on the ASEAN growth. The Vietnam War benefited the development of Thailand and Singapore, receiving US economic support. Moreover, Japan started to invest and providing official development assistance (ODA) in the region starting from early 1970s. In 1985 the Plaza Accord propounded on Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) and agreed on depreciating the dollar and appreciating the yen. Intensification of relations with Japan significantly increased the ASEAN manufacture and trade<sup>102</sup>.

With the end of Cambodian conflict, ASEAN became bereft of a clear common goal or a common enemy. Perhaps it was that lack of external threat that made ASEAN turn its focus on organization's structure that led to ASEAN's enlargement.

### **3.1.2.3. The third period (1988-1997)**

The stage was marked with major transformations in ASEAN brought by membership enlargement. With the end of Cold War and collapse of Soviet Union created environment for the change on the global scale. The communist versus non-communist ideological divide started to fade away, generating conditions for more practical mode of international relations. ASEAN began to push for deeper economic cooperation among its members by adopting a Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) scheme in 1992, which initiated movement towards ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

On the security field, ASEAN formed the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 engaging ASEAN's Dialogue partners (such as China, Vietnam, Russia, the US, EU) into the dialogue on regional and global security matters. The ARF has been an important figure in

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<sup>101</sup> ASEAN had at that time 6 members, as it was joined by Brunei in 1984 immediately after gaining independence.

<sup>102</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*.



ASEAN's external relations, as it is ASEAN-led process that reaches out to the entire region. It is the only body that reaches out to entire Asia-Pacific region, and exists to discuss political and security issues, providing a forum for its members to address common security challenges.

In the following year of 1995 the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) was signed. Successively, Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999) accessed the Association. Among all enlargement of ASEAN, Vietnamese accession was the most carried great weight, as it marked total abandonment of Cold War ideological groupings. Myanmar's entrance caused the biggest controversy and had its implication to ASEAN external relations, namely with the EU that objected to the idea of continuing dialogue with such an abusive, in terms of human rights, regime. However, ASEAN insisted on the "constructive engagement"<sup>103</sup> policy, thanks to which it now embraces the entire Southeast Asian sub-region.

Externally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations geopolitically "gained on weight"; but internally, new members increased organization's political, economic, cultural, and historical diversity and the complexity of ASEAN's decision-making processes. Original anti-communist orientation got diluted with the enlargement to the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam). According to Shaun Narine, the expansion was a result of competition between Thailand and Indonesia over the regional leadership. Thailand hoped that after rapprochement with Vietnam, the mainland Southeast Asia would be under its influence.

As a matter of fact, the expansion created the two-tier ASEAN, marking an evident gap between the wealthier old members and poorer new members. This has been a continuous challenge for the Association when developing a common foreign policy. It is also why the so-called "ASEAN Way" has been favoured as a cooperation style, accommodating the diversity of the members. As the Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar phrased: "*the ASEAN Way stresses informality, organization minimalism, inclusiveness, intensive consultations leading to*

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<sup>103</sup> The term "constructive engagement" was coined by the Malaysian Deputy Minister Anwaar Ibrahim in 1997 as a reaction of the events in Cambodia. As an alternative to non-intervention, "constructive engagement" was proposed as a proactive policy of involvement and assistance to "Southeast Asia's weaker nations to prevent their internal collapse". See: Simon S. C. Tay, "Institutions and Processes: Dilemmas and Possibilities" in: Simon S. C. Tay, Jesus P. Estanislao, Hadi Soesastro eds. *Reinventing ASEAN*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publication, Singapore, 2001. P. 253



*consensus and peaceful resolution of disputes*".<sup>104</sup> Detailed description of ASEAN Way is in the next subchapter which focuses on the norms and institutional format of organization.

During this phase *"ASEAN was in the state of euphoria because of the region's remarkable record of rapid economic growth, the near completion of the One Southeast Asia enterprise, and its role in the creation and strengthening of the wider regional cooperative structures, such as APEC and the ARF"*.<sup>105</sup> This period of significant changes closes up with the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997 in Thailand and avalanched to almost the entire East Asia.

#### **3.1.2.4. The fourth period after the crisis (1998-2007): recovery and transition.**

The financial crisis had enormous repercussions in the whole region. It revealed ASEAN's weaknesses as it failed to respond effectively. Not until 1997 that the Southeast Asian countries realized about their vulnerability and lack of safety nets. Heavily criticised for its reaction, or better say, no reaction to the crisis, ASEAN suffered from the tensions between its established practices of non-interference and the new demands of the complex and intertwined regional environment. As much as the Cambodian conflict displayed ASEAN's unity, the 1997 crises revealed its disunity. Not only did that create a feeling of frustration from inability to deal with existing problems, but that inaction eroded its regional influence.<sup>106</sup>

Yet, some positive consequences have been triggered by this trauma. For ASEAN, the crisis provided an impetus for enhancing economic cooperation internally, as well as seeking partnerships with other actors in the region. That led to the formation of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) mechanism in 2001, formalizing the dialogue with Northeast Asian neighbours: China, Japan and South Korea. This period is characterized with intensification of regional processes, as united by the aftermath of Asian financial crisis, East Asian nations realized of interdependence of their economy and lack of support of such global institutions like IMF or the World Bank.

With emergence of APT, East Asian Summit, and other multilateral initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region (many of which excluded the U.S.); ASEAN's membership became a core

<sup>104</sup> "ASEAN Unity Showing Signs of Praying", Strait Times, 23 July 1998, P. 30

<sup>105</sup> Hadi Soesastro, "ASEAN in 2030: the Long View" in: Simon S. C. Tay, Jesus P. Estanislao, Hadi Soesastro eds. *Reinventing ASEAN*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publication, Singapore, 2001. P. 287

<sup>106</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*.P. 166-167

centre. In the variety of those frameworks, where ASEAN was occupying the driver's seat – not only a driving force but also offering its informal, non-binding, and soft-institution model of cooperation style, so called “ASEAN Way” — manifests the success of flexibility and pragmatism of ASEAN external relations approach.

This period marks ASEAN's outward engagement with Asia which was paralleled with intensifying regionalism tendency. Regionalism, triggered by the Asian financial crisis, can be seen as a process for “handling globalization and interdependence”.<sup>107</sup> Another factor underlying the process is the “withdrawal” of the U.S. from regional security issues. The Bush administration at the time put East Asia on the lower priority list of external relations. Another factor for increasing East Asian cooperation was the establishment of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Although the prime mission of ASEM was to foster an inter-civilizational dialogue between Asia and Europe; however, unintentionally, and perhaps as a by-product of inter-regionalism, Asians, acting as one group, had a chance to develop a wider sense of unity and identity.

Having gained a stable position in the region, ASEAN realized also that it needed to strengthen its capacity to provide impetus for further progress. Already in the *ASEAN Vision 2000* issued in 1997, the Southeast Asian leaders aspired for “*an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by common regional identity*”<sup>108</sup>. Followed by the ASEAN Concord II from 2003, the identity issue re-emerged when the ASEAN Community was addressed as: “*fostering regional identity as well as cultivating people's awareness of ASEAN*”<sup>109</sup>.

The ASEAN Concord II, creating three-pillar Community demonstrated organization's resilience to move toward greater integration. Geoffrey Cockerham observing ASEAN from institutionalization angle, summarized the period as following: “*Despite the 1997 financial crisis, the 2000s have proven to be, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the most extensive decade of*

<sup>107</sup> Simon S. C. Tay, “ASEAN and East Asia: A New Regionalism?” in: Simon Tay, Jesus P. Estanislao, and Hadi Soesastro, *Reinventing ASEAN* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001). P. 209

<sup>108</sup> ASEAN, “ASEAN Vision 2000,” (1997). Available online: <http://environment.asean.org/index.php?page=overview:aseanvision> (last retrieved on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

<sup>109</sup> ASEAN, “Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II),” (2003). Available online: <http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm> (last retrieved on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

*ASEAN institutionalization*".<sup>110</sup> In my view, because of such crisis, ASEAN was pushed to seek for further cooperation mechanism even outside of its sub-region.

### 3.1.2.5. The fifth period

I suggest a fifth phase, which would start with ASEAN Charter, adopted in 2008, and marks the ongoing processes moving towards the establishment of the ASEAN Community 2015.

Entering this phase, ASEAN is much different that it was 40 years ago. At the establishment point ASEAN was much outward-looking; it was rather a result of on-going whirlwind external conditions. After 40 years of existence, and in much dissimilar environment, ASEAN is turning into more inward-looking organization, putting efforts to deepen integration processes, and narrowing the internal development gap among its members.

The ASEAN Charter, signed in 2007, came into force in 2008, finally gave the Association a legal personality and pointed a new direction of development. It proclaimed that creating the new ASEAN Community goal is to "*strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, with due regard to the right and responsibilities*"<sup>111</sup> of the member states. The Charter content was a big step forward towards institutionalization and legalization of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The ASEAN Charter marked a new era for ASEAN, united by One Vision, One Identity and One Community. The Association now is focused on building its comprehensive Community encompassing three sub-communities namely: ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

The ASEAN Charter very much echoed what was said in the Bali Concord II, since when the "people-centered ASEAN" became a buzzword. The idea of creating an ASEAN human

<sup>110</sup> Geoffrey Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way," *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2010). P. 175

<sup>111</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Charter," (2008).P.2: Available online: <http://www.asean.org/21069.pdf> (last retrieved on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

rights mechanism has overcome the internal objection and has been approved in a consensus way. As the result the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established in 2009. Not only did the Charter make a move towards greater institutionalization of the organization; it also extended ASEAN's direction towards more participatory and inclusive for non-state actors and civil society to engage in the process of Community building. This shows a major transformation in the Association's nature, that for the first time, overcoming internal dispute, talks about democratic values, human rights and good governance. In the same time, the Charter reconfirms the core principles such as: non-interference.

This phase is characterized with ASEAN seeking for its own identity and actively promoting shared norms. Perhaps at the middle-age, the inward-looking tendency is necessary for reaffirming itself and convincing other actors about its relevance. With external conditions of looming rising China in the region and many, often overlapping and also to some extent competitive, regional processes, ASEAN needs to readjust itself. It has been named the driving force of regionalism in the Asia-Pacific region, being at the center of multilateral institutions in the region. Yet, facing current competition challenges, ASEAN is questioned about ability to maintain the centrality position. Hence, looking back to own foundations seems natural as it tries to strengthen its capacity and unity.

### **3.2. ASEAN-EU inter-regional development:**

#### **3.2.1. ASEAN–EU relations before Karlsruhe Meeting (1970s and 1980s)**

This phase of relationship between ASEAN and EU was dominated by the Cold War heritage. Bilateral relations as a group-to-group dialogue can be traced back to the 1970s. Prior to that time<sup>112</sup> there had been very little contact with either Asian countries in general or ASEAN in particular. In 1972 ASEAN set up a Special Coordinating Committee of ASEAN Nations (SCCAN) consisting of the ASEAN Ministers of Trade, and the ASEAN Brussels Committee (ABC) composed of the ASEAN Ambassadors and to the European Community.<sup>113</sup> In the same

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<sup>112</sup> The time frame is set after the decolonization period, not reaching further than the contemporary history.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Hull, "European Community – ASEAN Relations: A Model for International Partnership," *Asian Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1984).15-26.

year ASEAN-EU became Dialogue Partners; in 1975 the ASEAN-EC Joint Study Group was created to look into trade-related matters, which was followed by inauguration of ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in 1978.

At that stage initiative came from ASEAN side, as a response to economic integration in Europe. After the UK accessed the European Community, Singapore and Malaysia, the former British colonies, started to be concerned about their trade preferences of Commonwealth (Bridges 1999, Ruland 2001, Ruland and Storz 2008<sup>114</sup>). This market-driven rationale initiated rapprochement to Brussels. The main motivation behind was to mitigate discriminatory effect of trade as a result of European Common Market. It was also ASEAN's strategy to diversify its trade relations from Japanese and American dominance.

From the EC's point of view, ASEAN relevance was primarily for its richness in natural resources and strategic geography. At the political level, its position was considered a zone of stability in South East Asia and a bulwark against the Communist threat in the region. For ASEAN, the EC was important not only for the ideological level of democracy and free enterprise system, but also because of the moderating role it plays in the international meetings between the developing and developed countries.<sup>115</sup> ASEAN countries also had material incentives, including trade, investment and financial regulations, to reach out to Europe.

The formalization of ASEAN-EC relations came in 1980s with EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement. However, despite those positive signals in the relationship, ASEAN remained at the bottom of EC's hierarchy of external relations, below the African, Caribbean and Pacific and Latin American countries.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, at that stage the relationship still was heavily asymmetrical, based on donor-recipient mode as ASEAN was much dependent on the EC in terms of investment, development aid, and technology. The Cooperation Agreement made specific reference that despite ASEAN's rapid development it remained very much a developing region, and the EC would aim to expand its cooperation to accelerate the development of the

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<sup>114</sup> Brian Bridges, *Europe and the challenge of the Asia Pacific : change, continuity and crisis* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1999); Ruland, *Asian-European relations : building blocks for global governance?*

<sup>115</sup> Hull, "European Community – ASEAN Relations: A Model for International Partnership." P. 15-26.

<sup>116</sup> Yeo Lay Hwee, "Southeast Asian: Looking forward, looking back", Paper presented at EUROSEAS 98, Hamburg, 3-6 September 1998.

ASEAN countries and of the region as a whole.<sup>117</sup> It established an unequal relationship in which the ASEAN countries were inevitably in a weaker bargaining position. This “*distantly friendly relationship*”<sup>118</sup> remained until the end of the Cold War.

Despite the existing arrangements of relations, the relationship suffered obstacles on the deeper levels of cultural and perceptual norms. Such “cold” relationship shows that the mutual interests were reflected by the psychological distance. This gap that was later recognized by both sides, and therefore there was a need to build a bridge in the form of ASEM.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity of world order, the US and EC were “less inclined to cooperate with authoritarian, albeit pro-Western, regimes”<sup>119</sup>. Hence, EC was free to intensify its conditionality of liberal democracy, respect for human rights, and market economy and disarmament cornerstones in European foreign policy. European criticism of Southeast Asian countries for their human rights situation worsened the relationship. The admission of Myanmar<sup>120</sup> to the ASEAN membership and Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor created a deadlock in ASEAN-EC relations. Moreover, European conditionality linking trade and aid to issues of human rights, democratization and environmental protection was not well received in many Southeast Asian countries. This moralism was criticized as a “neo-colonialism” tendency by the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.<sup>121</sup>

Moralism referred is tightly correlated to the cultural and perceptual norms. The European attachment to human rights reflects their perception of importance of human rights norms even in economic or political dialogue. This confirms my argument that international relations, whether within region or inter-regionally, are all affected by cognitive factors.

The breakthrough came in September 1994 at 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting in Karlsruhe. It was when the EC’s New Asian Strategy policy made a debut, taking back EU from normative to more pragmatic policy towards ASEAN. Up till that time, EC was characterized by

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<sup>117</sup> Hull, “European Community – ASEAN Relations: A Model for International Partnership.”

<sup>118</sup> Rüländ, *Asian-European relations : building blocks for global governance*; *ibid.* P. 7

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* P.7

<sup>120</sup> The repressive regime of military junta was disapproved by the EU due to the bad human right records.

<sup>121</sup> Rüländ, *Asian-European relations : building blocks for global governance?* P.7



inward-looking attitude. It was for the first time that EU elevated Asia to a priority of its external relations and stated the need for more equal partnership. Europe's "rediscovery of Asia"<sup>122</sup> in 1990s was determined by growing awareness of the region as an awakening economic world power and it was also a response to the formation of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), to which Europe was not invited.

The New Asia Strategy, the fundamental document behind the European Union's engagement with East Asia,<sup>123</sup> stated three main objectives: multi-dimensional cooperation, equality overcoming the old "donor-recipients", and comprehensive approach overarching economic, strategic, and developmental collaboration tailored to the regional conditions<sup>124</sup>. It acknowledged that there is a need to go beyond economic and cover political, security and cultural areas. In this period, the EU deliberately pursued the role of an external federator in relations to ASEAN using two strategies: (1) functioning as a regional integration model, and (2) a partner in the inter-regional dialogue.<sup>125</sup>

The novelty of the New Asia Strategy included the following elements: firstly, multi-dimensional approach reflected Europe's realization of the need to revise the neglected relations after the colonial period. Secondly, the new strategy emphasized relations between equals in contrast to the old donor-recipient relationship the EU had with many Asian countries. And thirdly, the conception of a comprehensive approach toward Asia was to be one that made a clear differentiation between the policy instruments employed according to the partner country or group of countries and their levels of development, and which focused resources with maximum impact on effectiveness and profile. The policy instruments referred to included the existing bilateral and regional cooperation agreements; multilateral trade systems; development aid; and investment and financial facilities.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Bart Gaens, *Europe-Asia interregional relations : a decade of ASEM*, The international political economy of new regionalisms series. (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). P. 25

<sup>123</sup> East Asian and most of ASEAN countries were the first target partners, ASEM expanded to other Asian members in the following years.

<sup>124</sup> Gaens, *Europe-Asia interregional relations : a decade of ASEM*. P.9-10

<sup>125</sup> Rüland, "ASEAN and the European Union: A Bumpy Inter-regional Relationship."

<sup>126</sup> Gaens, *Europe-Asia interregional relations : a decade of ASEM*. P. 18-19.



### 3.2.2. Karlsruhe Meeting – the turning point of the EU foreign policy towards Asia (1994-1996)

As much as ASEAN was seeking to secure its economic interests in 1970s while pursuing closer ties with EC, the roles reversed in 1990s, when Europe had to consider its gains and losses to engage with rapidly developing Asia. The inauguration of ASEAN-EU Senior Official Meeting in Singapore in 1995, as a follow-up from Karlsruhe, was a mutual recognition that fast changing political and economic developments, as a result of integration taking in both regions, would affect further ASEAN-EU relations.<sup>127</sup>

From the European perspective, the New Asia Strategy was “*an attempt to formulate a positive Asia-wide perspective in EU policy thinking and push Asia higher up an overcrowded EU agenda*”.<sup>128</sup> ASEAN was a gateway to Asia for EU because it is the only homogenous multilateral negotiation partner in Asia. Therefore it was positioned as “*a cornerstone of the EU’s dialogue with the Asian region*”.<sup>129</sup>

Karlsruhe hence, marked a new opening in the two regions relations. Followed by the decision to establish an ASEAN-EU Eminent Persons Group, an Asian-European summit meeting was first proposed also in 1994 by Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who expressed the need to bridge the continents by establishing a “partnership for growth”. Karlsruhe meeting paved a way to a new inter-regional forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

In March 1996, the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit convened in Bangkok, bringing together 15 EU countries, the President of EU Commission, ASEAN-7 (except for Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar), China, Japan and South Korea. ASEM took over many functions of the ASEAN-EU dialogue; in fact after the establishment of ASEM, the ASEAN-EU meetings got suspended for the period of 1997-2000.

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<sup>127</sup> Siow Yue Chia and Loong-Hoe Tan, *ASEAN & EU : forging new linkages and strategic alliances* (Singapore/ Paris, France: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies ; OECD Development Centre, 1997). P.12

<sup>128</sup> Jacques Pelkmans, “A Bond in search for more substance: Reflections on EU’s ASEAN policy” in: *ibid.* P. 35.

<sup>129</sup> ASEAN/EU (1994): “Joint Declaration of the Eleventh ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Karlsruhe”, 22-23 September 1994, paragraph 3, available online: <http://www.asean.org/2231.htm> (last retrieved Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

An overview suggests that up to that point, it seems that economic dimensions were leading in the ASEAN-EU relationships. Let's have a closer look at the mutual motivations.

Let's have a closer look at the motives behind the New Asia Strategy. As a consequence of rapidly changing politico-economic conditions in East Asia, Europe re-designed Asia's position in its external relations. In early 1990s there appeared a serial of concept papers for improving bilateral relations with South Korea (1993), Japan (1995), China (1995), and ASEAN (1996). The paper "Towards the New Asia Strategy", treating Asia as a multilateral partner was adopted in December 1994<sup>130</sup>. The New Asia Strategy (NAS) is an outcome of a series of pressures and events, among which three groups can be distinguished. The first groups of factors came from Asia itself, namely the Asian booming markets. By that time, ASEAN had started making efforts towards ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), and subsequently began informal talks on security, which was later upgraded to ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Two giants, China and India, showed increasing interests in integrating into world economy by pursuing GATT.

The second group of factors originated from within the Union and its foreign policy change since Maastricht. Along with efforts of world community to strengthen the multilateral trade system of GATT in 1980s and 1990s, there comes a stronger regional economic integration tendency. Since 1992 the EC had pursued a uniform trade policy, in addition to Uruguay Round results, EU became conscious of unilateral opening up in many Asian countries and their increased support for GATT. The third factor was related to the fading centrality of the Atlantic relationship in various fields as trade, FDI, and security. Thus, the New Asia Strategy is a statement of the EU's recognition of Asia's importance and the Union's urgent need of enhancing its presence in Asia.<sup>131</sup>

With the establishment of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1989, where Europe had no seat, the EU realized it had to re-establish its presence in Asia. EU—rejected an observer's status—feared that the APEC would turn to be a preferential trading bloc that would

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<sup>130</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, "ASEM and the Future of Asia-Europe Relations: Background, Characteristics and Challenges," *Asia Europe Journal* 2(2004). 341-354.

<sup>131</sup> Jacques Pelkmans, "A Bond in search for more substance: Reflections on EU's ASEAN policy," in *ASEAN & EU : forging new linkages and strategic alliances*, ed. Siow Yue Chia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997). P. 38-39

shut the EU out from its market. This pressured EU to seek for its own linkage with Asia to avoid unfavourable settings and isolation.<sup>132</sup>

The Commission's policy paper (NAS) was expected to "*lubricate and promote EU-ASEAN relations, but it is not a breakthrough, and a critical evaluation is needed.*"<sup>133</sup> NAS listed main objectives as:

(1) "To strengthen the EU's economic presence in Asia so as to maintain its leading role in the world economy (...) Given the pace of growth in Asia, active participation by European companies can also contribute to providing qualified jobs for European workers.

(2) To contribute to stability in Asia by promoting international co-operation and understanding, the EU must widen and deepen its political and economic relations with the countries in Asia.

(3) To promote the economic development of the less prosperous countries and regions in Asia. Given that Asia will for the foreseeable future continue to contain the world's largest concentration of poor people, the Union and its member states will need to continue to poverty alleviation and sustainable growth.

(4) To contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Asia."<sup>134</sup>

In other words, from economic motivation point of view, EU has adopted pragmatic approach to pursue favourable regulatory environment for its business in Asia. The NAS also highlighted EU's new political attitude towards Asia. After "negligence" in the post-colonial period, mentioned transformations have drawn Europe back to Asia, realizing the growing political weight of Asian region. It also feared losing position in the region to the US, particularly in global security matters.

*"The EU, on the other hand, has made its influence felt in Asia mainly through trade and investment, development cooperation and **cultural exchanges**. After its colonial episode, it does*

<sup>132</sup> Christopher M. Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 1, no. 2 (2003).

<sup>133</sup> Pelkmans, "A Bond in search for more substance: Reflections on EU's ASEAN policy." P. 55

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. P. 40

*not desire deep security involvement nor would it expect the ASEAN countries to welcome that. Nonetheless, there is much room for intensifying the EU's efforts in the political arena.*"<sup>135</sup>

It should be highlighted at this point, that cultural exchanges have been an important element in EU-ASEAN relations. Not only because it fit in the category of "other issues than hard security", as a result of the US dominance in that sphere in Asia, but particularly because of the colonial legacy and mutual "acquaintance" of partners' heritage. Further elaboration is made in the following chapter treating explicitly about norms and values related to cultural notions and conceptual perceptions.

### 3.2.3. The birth of ASEM (1996)

*"It is only because of ASEM that Euro-Asia relations have been catapulted to top priority in the EU."*<sup>136</sup>

The initiative was raised by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in October 1994 during his visit in France. The French Prime Minister, Mr. Edouard Balladur was supportive of the idea and promised working on support from the EU partners.<sup>137</sup> Yet, the formal inception of ASEM took place in 1996, as the idea did not meet with support in the very beginning. *"The initial reactions in Europe ranged from skepticism to hostility, especially from the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl"*.<sup>138</sup>

It was ASEAN who took the central position in the ASEM as a driving force that brought the forum together. The Association made efforts to persuade to the idea in two directions: towards its Northeast Asian neighbours, and the EU countries. It is beyond doubt that on the broader political and diplomatic level ASEAN has been successful in promoting itself as the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. P. 41 [Bold by the author]

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. P. 43

<sup>137</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, "The Bangkok ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 24(1997).

<sup>138</sup> David Camroux and Christian Lechervy, "Close Encounter of a Third King? The Inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting of March 1996," *Pacific Review* 9, no. 3 (1996). P. 443

bridge to wider relations between Europe and Asia, as well as the gateway to the wider Asia-Pacific region, and a facilitator in the wider Asia-Europe dialogue<sup>139</sup>.

The first ASEM meeting in Bangkok in March 1996 comprised of 15 EU members, 7 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and Japan, China and South Korea.

When ASEM was initially conceived, two basic and broad objectives were on the agenda: firstly to promote economic cooperation between Asia and Europe; secondly to develop direct and personal contacts between Asian and European leaders. *“It was meant to be an exploratory meeting with no fixed agenda, a la ‘ASEAN style’”*.<sup>140</sup>

This connects to my hypothesis three stating that ASEAN has played pivotal role in the creating ASEM and its institutional architecture. This point will be further elaborated in the following sub-chapter on institutional arrangements of ASEAN and ASEM.

According to the existing literature there are four reasons for ASEM’s birth: (1) the end of Cold War, (2) the changing distribution of power, (3) globalization, and (4) a structural shift from government to markets. The end of the Cold War is said to be the single most important success of decades of Atlanticism. It enabled new security arrangements in the Western Pacific, with EU emerging with its twofold interests in Pacific security:

(a) global one in preventing tensions from exploding in uncontrollable ways (particularly in case of North Korea); and

(b) regional one, as regional conflicts would undermine the NAS and its predicted benefits. It brought the change of distribution of power.

With the US gradually loosening its ties with Asia, the EU has emerged with a new role as civil and economic hegemon. The market globalization has become a forceful trend. Global competitiveness has become the condition for market benefits. European companies embraced the idea of developing strategies for Asian markets. In terms of the last factor, there has been an

<sup>139</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, *Asia and Europe : the development and different dimensions of ASEM*, Routledge advances in international relations and global politics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>140</sup> Yeo Lay Hwee, “Southeast Asian: Looking forward, looking back”, Paper presented at EUROSEAS 98, Hamburg, 3-6 September 1998.

apparent shift from the government to the market in East Asia. APEC has become a permanent machinery to push process of domestic reform and economic openness further. Such tendency has changed their adherence from unilateral reductions to trade barriers.<sup>141</sup>

According to the Chairman's Statement, ASEM was to cover three principal themes: (1) fostering political dialogue; (2) reinforcement of economic co-operation; and (3) promoting cooperation in other areas. The shared goal of Asia and Europe was expressed as "*maintaining and enhancing peace and stability, along with creating conditions conducive for economic and social development*". A common vision was to generate a new comprehensive Asia-Europe partnership for Greater Growth, and the need for closer people-to-people contacts: **to create greater understanding between the peoples** of both regions were emphasized.<sup>142</sup>

ASEM affirmed that the basis of political dialogue will be mutual respect, equality, promotion of fundamental rights, and in accordance with the rules of international law and obligation. However, the principle of non-intervention (direct or indirect) in each other's internal affairs was also stressed. ASEM did not launch any new institutional structures as it intended to build political dialogue on already existing dialogue between Europe and Asian on general security issues that is already working ASEAN-EU dialogue, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference.<sup>143</sup> This fact shows how essential the ASEAN-EU relations are for the broadening Asia-Europe cooperation and the bilateral ASEAN-EU relations has given the base for multilateral ASEM.

ASEM took a common, but very general stand in favour of multilateralism, non-discrimination, liberalization and open regionalism. Among ASEM priorities there were: (1) WTO; (2) trade and investment. It supported full participation by all ASEM members (including China) in the WTO. On the subject of trade and investment, ASEM aimed at working to facilitate and liberalize customs procedures and to streamline standards. Four other areas of attention were: science and technology (especially on agriculture, information and communication technology, energy, and transportation), human resource development (especially vocational and management training), development cooperation (especially poverty alleviation, promotion of

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<sup>141</sup> Pelkmans, "A Bond in search for more substance: Reflections on EU's ASEAN policy." P. 43-45

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. P.43

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. P.45-46



the role of women, public healthy, including AIDS prevention), and cultural exchange (cultural, artistic and educational activities, youth, tourism, student exchanges and cooperation between educational institutions and think-tanks).<sup>144</sup>

Both ASEAN's and the EU's intentions in launching ASEM, a solid inter-regional forum, was to promote political, economic with particular emphasis on trade and investment, security, and cultural cooperation. Yet, ASEAN's priorities were different from EU's. Unlike the Union, the Association was not eager to start a millennium round or initiate quick and radical liberalization measure within the WTO, instead ASEAN preferred to continue liberalization at slower pace. Labour regulations and standards, promoted by the EU, were not in ASEAN's agenda. It put emphasis on more pragmatic cooperation, taking ASEM towards more specific issue-oriented.

In fact, many ideas raised by ASEAN's for programs to be launched in ASEM surprised the European partners: *"What we had from the first ASEM in Bangkok was 'laundry list strategy', where each country seemed to be allowed to put forth their own favourite idea. The result is a mass of initiatives with little sense of priority"*<sup>145</sup>. Despite this criticism, it seems that lack of concrete agenda in ASEM was in fact in ASEAN's intention. It wished to have a "bazaar" open to all kinds of initiatives, which *"would not oblige anyone to anything, but present a forum that offered a maximum of possibilities to cooperate in any field whatsoever, as long as there was a benefit to be achieved"*.<sup>146</sup>

The Asia-Europe Meeting was innovative also because it set precedence for relationship between Asians and European countries on new terms. Despite of historical encounter, European and Asian countries had no experience in communication based on cooperation and dialogue. Traumatic memory of colonialism set a challenge for relationship between the regions. Indeed, the colonial heritage<sup>147</sup> had profound impact on the contemporary development of Southeast

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. P.47

<sup>145</sup> Gerald Segal, "Thinking strategically about ASEM : the subsidiary question," *Pacific Review* 10, no. 1 (1997). P.

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<sup>146</sup> Camroux and Lechervy, "Close Encounter of a Third King? The Inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting of March 1996." P. 443

<sup>147</sup> It is common that in Asia-Europe interface, the colonial legacy appear as the denominator. However, some scholars underline that the number of European countries with historic linkages with Southeast Asia limits to "only" five out of 27 of present EU members: Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and France<sup>147</sup>. They claim that ambiguity between previous colonizers and colonized should not be simplified to the entire groups of Asia and

Asian countries, especially if compare the “young” independence of that region of 50 years. It determinates the emphasis they put on the non-interference and sovereignty values.

But even over-passing the difficulties of history, the cooperation seems challenging due to the cultural differences, working style, and dissimilar priorities. Firstly, subjects of dialogue are not precise enough; particularly Asian partners often avoid being specific in identifying subjects which they want elaborate. Secondly, the treatment of issues is typically general and broad, which partly leads to the perception that the dialogue is not operational. The basic objective of the EU’s policies is therefore to operationalize the dialogue, call for efforts to establish political dialogue at the expert level, particularly on such issues as arm control and non-proliferation, human rights and drug-related matters.

The EU saw the inter-regional dialogue also as a forum to promote the ‘*development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*’. The New Asian Strategy clarified the EU’s view on the linkage of human rights, democracy and development and economic development: ‘*could bring about the progressive construction of civil society and thus improve the exercise of human rights, which in turn could also be an important factor for development*’<sup>148</sup>. Such attitude holding to the causality between human rights and economic relations as EU held, certainly created some barriers in the development of inter-regional process.

#### **3.2.4. ASEM and its meaning to the ASEAN-EU relations (first phase 1996-2000)**

*“The critical value of ASEM is that it was held in the first place. It initiated a process of dialogue between the EU and Asia – albeit in an ‘informal structure – and set the basis and network for future relations.’”*<sup>149</sup>

The turning point of ASEAN-EU relations came with the birth of NAS and ASEM consequently. According to Pelkmans, it had two opposing effects on the existing relationship.

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Europe. Yet, it is inevitable that the “sentiment” remains, and general association of “European” contains the colonial memories.

<sup>148</sup> Pelkmans, “A Bond in search for more substance: Reflections on EU’s ASEAN policy.” P. 41-42

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. P. 45



On the one hand, both NAS and ASEM emphasize a wider Asian context rather than ASEAN only. In its rhetoric it refers to East Asia, in particular on the Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs), rather than region-wise Southeast Asia. On the other hand, ASEAN has almost certainly risen to greater prominence precisely because of both initiatives<sup>150</sup>. The ASEM summit aimed to “re-launch a European presence in the region” complementing EU-ASEAN cooperation framework by serving mainly “to consolidate dialogue and extend its scope to such fields as the environment, social problems and vocational training”.<sup>151</sup>

The ASEAN-EU relations lacked of a summit meeting, ASEM began such tradition. ASEM being a summit meeting between the two continents positioned itself as an important inter-regional cooperation forum. Yeo Lay Hwee put emphasis on multi-dimentional cooperation: “*ASEM has awakened attention on both sides to the importance of such cooperation, especially in the light of Asia countries’ internal recognition of their too strong a dependence on the political, security-related and economic dominance of the United States in the region*”.<sup>152</sup>

**The Asia-Europe Meeting, hence I argue that can be seen as a result of an increasing consciousness in the East Asian countries of the necessity to diversify external relations, as well as EU’s newly discovered strategic value of East Asia.** This “coincidence of mutual interest” gave birth to 15 EU member states and 10 East Asian countries (ASEAN<sup>153</sup>, China, Japan, and South Korea) to launch ASEM.

This fill in the first component of my model – the awakening function. ASEM has awakened both regions about each other and the need for cooperation. This is the first stage of my cognitive regionalism model, where contact makes the actors realize of the surroundings as well as themselves. Another dimension of this awakening stage leads to differentiating is elaborated in the Chapter Four when talking about norms and identity.

The model shown in the research design chapter is now analysed in detail on the first level – level of awakening.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid. P. 48-49

<sup>151</sup> European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), "Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on Relations between the European Union and ASEAN," (1996).

<sup>152</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, "EU-ASEAN Relations and Policy Learning," in *Europe-Asia relations : building multilateralisms*, ed. Richard Balme and Brian Bridges (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). P. 70

<sup>153</sup> ASEAN here stands for ASEAN-7, without Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia yet.

## Awakening

- **Learning (first contact)**
- Differentiating

ASEM's establishment marked several important implications. First of all, in terms of political and diplomatic cooperation, for the first time in history of mankind such an inter-governmental dialogue between Asia and Europe as regions has been launched. And for the first time, for such a relevant gathering, the US was not included in the picture. Thirdly, ASEM has been conceptualized as the “missing link” in the triadic world order. And, perhaps even more evident, in terms of economic implications, ASEM by strengthening inter-regional linkages has shown the willingness to overcome the regionalism tendencies that have been prevailing since the 1980s. ASEM has also offered both Asians and Europeans mutually beneficial opportunities to pursue their market interests.

While Jacques Pelkmans and Jurgen Ruland looked at ASEM as a challenge to maintain ASEAN-EU attractiveness, Yeo Lay Hwee and David Camroux saw ASEAN as the initiator and driving force behind ASEM. According to the first perspective, although the ASEM's contribution was to “catapulted” Euro-Asia relations to higher priority in EU's external policy orientation, ironically it also overshadowed ASEAN-EU relations.

First of all, the novelty of such a form of forum that engages both macro regions was attractive enough to be followed. Secondly, ASEM offered a whole network of committees, working groups and Ministerials and even a Foundation, whereas ASEAN-EU relations have only slowly developed and with much less vision and determination. Third of all, unlike ASEAN-EU, ASEM is done “Asian way”, without cooperation agreements. Fourthly, ASEM

and ASEAN-EU cooperation agenda overlapped in many areas<sup>154</sup>. Ruland shared that view: “*ASEM reflects ASEAN’s lack of political clout in global fora and is increasingly taking over functions of the previous bi-regional relationship*”<sup>155</sup>.

Yeo Lay Hwee, on the other hand, argued that “*ASEM has propelled ASEAN to greater prominence in the eyes of the EU*”.<sup>156</sup> David Camroux viewed ASEM’s potential of bringing some optimistic inputs into ASEAN-EU relations. Although he is not a fan of ASEM – which he called “a half-baked United Nations but devoid of permanence, staff, finances, institutions or real legitimacy”<sup>157</sup>, he believed it might be to ASEAN’s benefit if it manages to return to the more fruitful ASEAN-EU cooperation track. Convening EU-ASEAN Summit in September 2007 as a celebration of 30 years of formal relations certainly did mark the relevance of the relationship for both regions.

### 3.2.5. Summary of historical background

This part has outlined the historical conditions for ASEAN development and the ASEAN-EU relations. Description of historical background of intra-ASEAN and inter ASEAN-EU relations is essential to give this analysis the understanding of how the circumstances shaped the nature and existence of the organizations.

Security conditions and to some extent, economic motives were essential motivations for both organizations’ development. Little has been said about cultural cooperation, hence there was little happening in this field, at least under institutional auspices. As will be shown in next chapter, cultural cooperation has been launched, once stability and peace have been reached. Cultural cooperation was not as frequent as in Europe for such reasons as political turmoil,

<sup>154</sup> Jacques Pelkmans, “A Bond in Search of More Substance: Reflections on the EU’s ASEAN Policy” in: Chia Siow Yue, Joseph L. H. Tan eds. *ASEAN & EU: Forging New Linkages and Strategic Alliances*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. 1997.

<sup>155</sup> Jurgen Ruland, “ASEAN and the European Union: A Bumpy Interregional Relationship”, Discussion Paper C95 2001, Center for European Integration Studies, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität, Bonn. P.28

<sup>156</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, “Southeast Asian: Looking forward, looking back,” in *EUROSEAS 98* (Hamburg 1998).

<sup>157</sup> David Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Asymmetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism,” *Les Cahiers Européens de Science Po*. 4(2006).

distrust among the states and lack of connectivity; let alone the free movement of people and their activities.

While there existed some private level of business, trade and investment which were later assisted and promoted by official arrangements. Cultural cooperation might have come the last in the line, once peace is assured and economic exchange has benefit region's growth.

Table 11 Time-frame of intra- and inter-regional development

<b>Time-frame</b>	<b>Intra-regional (ASEAN)</b>	<b>Inter-regional (ASEAN-EU)</b>
<b>1990-1996</b>	Development of ASEAN 10	New phase of EU-ASEAN relations
<b>1996-2004</b>	Entity consolidation and recovery from the crisis	Establishment of ASEM and ASEF
<b>2004-2008</b>	Towards ASEAN Charter	Enlargement of inter-regional process
<b>2008-2012</b>	ASEAN after 40, new ASEAN	Re-definition of ASEM and its scope

Source: Author's analysis

This analysis has underlined the role of external factors that affected creation and development of ASEAN. Many of given arguments are derived from rationalist perspective, seeing ASEAN as a “product of interests of its member states”, or a response to the strategic incentives for forming an organization.<sup>158</sup> But as was pictured above, the common trait for Southeast Asia was a shared history of foreign intervention (whether from colonialism experience or Cold War interests of the Soviet Union and U.S.). Mutual interests and will for cooperation arose from the need to acquire national security and self-determination from outside powers, and thus the birth of an intergovernmental body of ASEAN.

<sup>158</sup> Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way."

In summing up the history of inter- and intra- regional relations, there surface three patterns: a need to deal with ambiguous colonial heritage, the Cold-War context, and strategic competition factor. It is fair to say that the ASEAN-EU relations were motivated by competition. ASEAN at first when seeking for ties with EU feared losing competitiveness once the “closed” and “Fortress Europe” is established. At the following stage, with Asians economies growing and the foundation of APEC, Europe needed to compete for the relevance in the region as well as for the balance in the emerging triadic world power structure.

While New Asia Strategy reflecting “Europe’s rediscovery of Asia”, it showed a realization that if not revise the neglected relationship with Asia, Europe’s role in global politics and economy would be under challenge. On similar token, perhaps ASEAN— who once managed to bridge Europe with wider Asia-Pacific region in initiating the ASEM process – should revise its position. Particularly, at the current phase, competition with other regional initiatives, as well as with China is a relevant force in building-up its capacity and strengthening organization’s structure.

In other words, ASEAN-EU relations, as well as the development of ASEAN itself have been determined by external factors that have been described in this part. The next part shifts the focus to the nature and character of ASEAN and ASEM organizations.

### **3.3. Institutional design and working format of ASEAN and ASEM**

#### **3.3.1. Institutionalization of ASEAN**

Institutionalization has never been the strongest asset of ASEAN. In fact, it refused to go towards such an institutional model from the beginning of its inception. ASEAN Way, representing Southeast Asian norms, often justified that modality. It also has been blamed as the reason for organization’s weakness. But, ASEAN is considered “weak” because institutional strength is measured in terms of legalization and militarization – neither of which describes ASEAN well.

The minimal institutionalization over the past forty years has resulted from complex interaction of preferences and goals, the sanctity of sovereignty, conventions, and customs, as

well as changes in the external environment. ASEAN's experience demonstrates that, at the beginning, institutions were the product of preference and goals. However, once in place, institutions set parameters to further action. This is reflected in ASEAN's institutional developments in the first two decades of its existence. The modest preferences and goals reflected the founders' realistic understanding of the prevailing geopolitical conditions. This forms the basis for ASEAN's state-to-state structure. But ironically, having established its basic institutional architecture, ASEAN was trapped into a situation where it prefers to stay with safe and familiar modus operandi.<sup>159</sup>

Simon Tay saw both continuity and change in ASEAN's institutional development pattern. He analyzed the ASEAN development phases from institutionalization point of view: In the first phase (1967-1976) ASEAN's regional cooperation was facilitated by loose, highly decentralized institutional structure, and its functional programmes were driven by the national ASEAN secretariats. The following phase (1976-1992), ASEAN served as "travelling circus" with increasing level of activity in different fields, but with only minimal and largely administrative ASEAN Secretariat. The third phase (from 1992- onward) with the Singapore Declaration and the first real economic undertakings, requiring more coordination on issues and policies, and a greater institutionalization of ASEAN. "Throughout these three periods, there has been constant reiteration of the ASEAN Way. Deliberately avoiding "Brussels" example, counterpoising the legalism and formalism of the "Brussels Way".<sup>160</sup> Tay suggested that ASEAN intentionally underlined its association nature which was dissimilar to the Union's arrangements. At the present stage, ASEAN is under the pressure to change its modus operandi "from being a mechanism or forum simply for confidence-building, to an institution with a problem-solve role".<sup>161</sup>

Furthermore, ASEAN was successful to imply such a choice on a common project with the EU – the Asia Europe Meeting to not to pursue to institutionalization resembling the Union's. Therefore, my Hypothesis Three arguing about the ASEAN's predominant role despite the fact that is not as active as the EU is in the ASEM activities.

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<sup>159</sup> Hadi Soesastro, "ASEAN in 2030: the Long View" in: Simon S. C. Tay, Jesus P. Estanislao, Hadi Soesastro eds. *Reinventing ASEAN*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publication, Singapore, 2001. P. 281

<sup>160</sup> Tay, Estanislao, and Soesastro, *Reinventing ASEAN*. P.248

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. P. 249



### 3.3.2. ASEAN Norms and the ASEAN Way

While majority of criticism addresses the ASEAN Way, to many observers, it is the ASEAN Way that is the core of Associations' viability. ASEAN Way is about the management and containment of problems. It is a 'consultative process' that is primarily motivated by the desire to create a stable intramural environment. Consensus relies on the willingness of the members to be aware of the larger interests at stake in a situation. The negotiations that take place in the spirit of consultations are not as between opponents but as between friends and brothers.<sup>162</sup>

At the foundation of ASEAN Way there are distinct sets of social and cultural norms that shaped the format, working style and even identity of ASEAN. While discussing the issue of norms, not only do we need to answer to the question: what are they, but also: where do they come from? Amitav Acharya gave a succinct summary of definitions for consultations (musyawarah) consensus (mufakat). The spirit of "togetherness" in consultation and negotiation style has been referred as common cultural heritage of the Malaysian and Indonesian village culture. "*ASEAN Way could be seen as a by-product of cultural similarities among the ASEAN societies.*"<sup>163</sup>

Consultations refer to the pre-negotiation stage of 'intensive informal and discreet discussion that in the end brings out the general consensus of the community'. The consultations are on basis of equality, tolerance and understanding, and thus could be seen as soft diplomacy. Consensus represents a commitment to finding a "*way of moving forward by establishing what seem to have broad support.*"<sup>164</sup> Consensus can cause limitation to effectiveness, but in the ASEAN case it is a necessary safety mechanism that assures all members that their interests would not be sacrificed and decision would not be made against their will. Moreover, the consensus style is also essential for non-threatening multilateral setting, guided by shared commitment to moderation and accommodation.

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<sup>162</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P. 11

<sup>163</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia : ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, Politics in Asia series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001). P. 64

<sup>164</sup> Lee Kuan Yew cited in , *Straits Times* 13 November 1994.

The legal-rational norms are stated by ASEAN flagship documents, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Among the principles that TAC stated there were: the mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; the right of each state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences and disputes by peaceful means; and renunciation of the threat of use of force.

If one bears in mind that socio-cultural norms are about informality, organization minimalism, inclusiveness, intensive consultations leading to consensus, and peaceful resolution of disputes, then the legal-rational norms are natural consequence of such a mentality. The high degree of consultations, informality, consensus-building, interaction and cooperation based on discreteness, and non-confrontational bargaining style have resulted in ASEAN's pragmatism and flexibility. As the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Hussein Onn observed: *"ASEAN has been able to absorb national differences because it is a relatively informal organization without rigid rules of procedure and without elaborate structural machinery."*<sup>165</sup>

It is through interaction and the practice of common norms that the Association developed a sense of common identity: *"Little conception of a Southeast Asian identity existed in the region when ASEAN was founded in 1967. Repeated interaction through ASEAN over the years created this identity. These interactions have led a norm of behaviour among ASEAN states known as the ASEAN Way."*<sup>166</sup>

I underline the fact of interaction, and the preference of informal means of interaction, often including personal networks. The socialization of ASEAN working mechanism, known as ASEAN Way, has also had to be communicated first within its own group, socialized, and acquired and internalized before becoming an ASEAN style that was able to be transmitted outside of ASEAN framework.

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<sup>165</sup> Cited in: R. P. Anand, Purificacion C. Valera Quisumbing, and East-West Culture Learning Institute., *Asean identity, development & culture* (Quezon City: : University of the Philippines Law Center & East-West Center Culture Learning Institute, 1981).P. 399

<sup>166</sup> Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way." P. 167



Further discussion on the norms and practices of cooperation, particularly in terms of juxtaposing ASEAN Way with European style of cooperation, is provided in the Chapter Four “Norms, Values and Identities”.

### 3.3.3. Meetings and format

*“ASEAN was created with a fairly loose institutional structure.”*<sup>167</sup>

In terms of organizational structure, ASEAN Secretariat serves representing, coordination, and facilitation functions. The ASEAN Secretariat was established in 1976 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN, and is housed by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Jakarta. But the role of Secretary General was not enhanced until 1992 at the Fourth ASEAN Summit, when the designation was changed from Secretary General of ASEAN Secretariat to Secretary General of ASEAN. The expansion of the Secretary with open recruitment system was well received and showed high interests from in job market. A new function was added with two Deputy Secretary General in rotating from member states, five Bureau Directors handling general affairs, economic cooperation, functional cooperation, ASEAN Cooperation and Dialogue Relations, and the FTA Bureau.<sup>168</sup>

Increasingly frequent meetings of the Heads of Government were an important indication of institutional evolution of ASEAN. Since 1992 ASEAN leaders decided to meet every three years with informal meetings in between. In 1995 the meetings were regularized into annual informal meeting between the formal ones. These meetings transformed ASEAN from a diplomatic organization into *“a truly comprehensive regime for regional governance of common affairs”*.<sup>169</sup> Chin Kin Wah saw ASEAN institutional building reflecting *“gradualistic and adaptive approach”* which, nevertheless, has been *“a necessary response to the changing needs and mission of the regional association.”*<sup>170</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P.16

<sup>168</sup> Chin Kin Wah, "ASEAN Institutional Building," in *The 2nd ASEAN Reader*, ed. Sharon Siddique and Sree Kumar (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003). P.38

<sup>169</sup> M.C.Abad Jr., "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Challenges and Responses," in *The 2nd ASEAN Reader* ed. Sharn Siddque and Sree Kumar (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003). P. 35

<sup>170</sup> Wah, "ASEAN Institutional Building." P.38

The Annual Ministerial Meetings (AMM) of the ASEAN foreign ministers was the organization's main decision-making body. The AMM was supported by the ASEAN Standing Committee (ASC), which handled daily affairs of the organization. The ASC rotated annually between members and was chaired by the foreign minister of the host nation and comprised of the ambassadors of the respective ASEAN states within the host nation. ASEAN Secretariats were created as part of the Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN states. The AMM is de facto the governing body of ASEAN. The Post-Ministerial Conferences (ASEAN-PMC) institutionalized the communication with ASEAN dialogue partners.

Annual Ministerial Meetings perform the following four functions:

- (1) the AMM serves as a useful vehicle by which ASEAN high officials become more acquainted with one another, recognize one another's problems better, become more sensitive to one another's interests and promote greater mutual understanding;
- (2) the AMM constitutes a forum for the institutionalization of a habit of dialogues among the member states;
- (3) the AMM provides a venue for consultation and exchange of views over bilateral and regional problems whenever they arise;
- (4) the AMM plays a central role as a forum for regional confidence-building measures in Southeast Asia.

All these functions contributed greatly to the institution of a regional mechanism for conflict management and reduction among its member states. It is through them that ASEAN has gradually come to develop the notion of an "ASEAN spirit" as the primary basis of solidarity and unity-building. These four functions of the AMM reflect a degree of modesty in the preferences and goals in the establishment of ASEAN. It was this modesty that allowed ASEAN to consider further actions and greater cooperation beyond the political arena.<sup>171</sup>

ASEAN Ministerial Meetings serves as the main vehicle through which ASEAN exercised its external relations with the purpose of securing wider international support. AMM, successfully launching a mechanism for confidence-building, started to play both intramural and

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<sup>171</sup> Soesastro, "ASEAN in 2030: the Long View." P. 282-283

extramural roles. The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) had no formal standing in ASEAN's structure but it was the one to hold regular intra-ASEAN political consultations and serviced the AMM. ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting later transformed to Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) to serve similar function on economic matters.<sup>172</sup>

In terms of legal and institutional capacity, over forty years of operation, ASEAN has issued 95 legally binding agreements.<sup>173</sup> There are five types of documents that ASEAN issues:

1. Declarations: ASEAN Concord I, II, the Manila Declaration of 1987, Singapore Declaration 1992, the Bangkok Summit Declaration 1995, Hanoi Declaration 1998, Declaration on Terrorism 2002, Kuala Lumpur Declaration 2005;
2. Ministerial Meetings Statements: similar to declarations, MMS are agreements designed to publicize common understanding without assuming obligations.
3. Principal agreements: exhibit a number of different titles such as treaty, arrangements, memorandums of understanding, and protocols.
4. Supplementary protocols: designed to further the objectives in pre-existing principal agreements.
5. Protocols that amend principal agreements: they differ from supplementary protocols by modifying the language, or adding new provision to change the principal agreements in minor procedural matters.<sup>174</sup>

The next step toward a regional community is the strengthen ASEAN institutions. The ASEAN Charter replied to the need for constitutional framework. It codified the existing norms, rules, and values. The ASEAN Charter did not, however, replace any prior ASEAN agreements. By codifying the existing practices of political interaction, the Charter did advance ASEAN institutionalization, rather than allowing it to move toward autonomous supranational institution. It does emphasis on the continuity of ASEAN as elite-driven but informal process, basing decision-making on consensus and consultations.

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<sup>172</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P. 16

<sup>173</sup> The number of declarations refers to the period 1967-2007. Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way." P. 170

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. P. 169 -170

Compliance mechanism – mentioned earlier in quoting Rodolfo C. Severino – is an important element in enhancing institutionalization process. ASEAN has issued a number of principal agreements which successfully avoided compliance. About 65% of the agreements have provision often called for settlement by negotiations or consultations. Around 30% of the agreements included provision for monitoring or transparency, or both. During 40 years ASEAN only issued 2 agreements with indication of possible sanctions for non-compliance: the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Free Zone of 1995, and Protocol on the Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism of 2004.<sup>175</sup>

ASEAN is torn in between a desire for mutually cooperative benefits (mostly economic) and a practice of limiting delegation to regional authorities (meaning the adherence to the sovereignty and non-intervention principle). Therefore, ASEAN institutional mechanism is a compromise between these two motives. Yet, the recent transformations, have demonstrated its willingness to deepen integration.

### **3.4. Institutional design and working format of ASEM**

#### **3.4.1 Institutional arrangements of ASEM**

Strategic rationale of completing the triangle among three engines of global economy: America, Europe, and East Asia, was accepted as *raison d'être* of ASEM. When proposed in 1994 by Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, the Meeting's intention was to **bridge the gap in interaction between Asia and Europe** by establishing an institutional framework for two regions to systematically engage each other. Despite the official goal, stated as to achieve a new comprehensive "Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth", there remained differences in interest calculations by each members. The birth of ASEM not only started a new page in Asia-Europe relations, but it marked great expectations from both sides.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid. P. 178-179

In the inaugural ASEM Summit in 1996 in Bangkok, the members were occupied with “common goals” challenge. The key principles agreed on were listed in the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF), adopted in ASEM2, amended in ASEM3, ASEM should be:

- conducted on basis of equal partnership, mutual respect and mutual benefit;
- be an open and evolutionary process – enlargement should be conducted on the basis of consensus by the heads of state/government;
- enhance mutual understanding and awareness through a process of dialogue and lead to cooperation on the identification of priorities for concerted and supportive action;
- carry forward the three key dimensions of ASEM with the same impetus to foster political dialogue, reinforce economic cooperation and promote cooperation in other areas;
- not be institutionalized; as an informal process, ASEM should stimulate and facilitate progress in other fora; and
- go beyond governments in order to promote dialogue and cooperation between the business/private sectors of the two regions and, no less importantly, between the peoples of the two regions; ASEM should also encourage the cooperative activities of think-tanks and research groups of both regions.<sup>176</sup>

As the scope, degree and coverage of integration process in the two regions differ significantly, ASEM can be said to compromise the inter-regional and inter-state aspects of cooperation.<sup>177</sup> ASEM cooperation differs from other international institutions for its comprehensiveness; not only does it encompass political, economic but also cultural agenda. In terms of operating character, ASEM adopts informality, known from the Asian experience of cooperation style. Another innovation that the Asia-Europe Meeting has proclaimed is equality among the members. According to the vision of ASEM, it is supposed to be a forum of equal partners; that equality was for the first time the history of Asia and Europe relations underlined as the principle.

The Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework adopted in 2000, stated explicitly that political cooperation develops “on the basis of mutual respect and equality, promotion of fundamental

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<sup>176</sup> "Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework," (2000).

<sup>177</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, “ASEM and the Future of Asia-Europe Relations: Background, Characteristics and Challenges”. *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 2, 2004: 341-354

rights and, in accordance with the rules of international law and obligations, non-intervention, whether direct or indirect, in each other's internal affairs".<sup>178</sup> This mantra is familiar to all ASEAN observers, now has been exported to the Asia-Europe Meeting modus operandi.

The establishment of ASEM brought into international system an innovative form of inter-regional relations with distinct character. First of all, the very name of "Meeting" suggests that it aims to function as a forum for inter-regional cooperation. Second of all, the membership denoted by the "Asia" and "Europe" suggests a certain degree of exclusion, namely not welcoming other members than from these two continents. Even within the "Europe" and "Asia", membership was exclusively claimed by the European Union and ASEAN+3, at the time, respectively.<sup>179</sup>

ASEM aimed to be an informal, non-binding dialogue forum based on equality and consensus. ASEM is a political framework for diverse activities and bodies rather than a unitary actor or structure. ASEM has aptly been defined as a holistic mechanism for inter-regional diplomacy. ASEM is a process of dialogue and cooperation rather than a stable system of activities. Moreover, it is not rule-based system, and its activities are launched by means of agreement.

Leadership is the key for effectiveness in ASEM, like any other international process. Since ASEM is a forum of equal partners and decision-making based on consensus, leadership must be issue- and interest-based and not power-based. This idea is also to "*engender a sense of ownership among the different ASEM partners so that interest in the ASEM process can be maintained*".<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> "Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework." Par. 12, available online:

<http://www.aseminfoboard.org/About/AECF2000/#iii> (last retrieved on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

<sup>179</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities," (Tokyo: University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, Japan Center for International Exchange, , 2006). P. 8

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. P. 16



### 3.4.2. The three-pillar structure

The Asia-Europe Meeting is organized by the three-pillar structure, divided by themes of cooperation. This study aims at exploring the under-explored third pillar of socio-cultural cooperation; however, this part gives a brief outline of all three pillars. The following chapter is devoted entirely to examine the cultural dimension of inter-regional cooperation.

#### 3.4.2.1. The political Pillar

*“For years the political dialogue between Asia and Europe was limited and often dominated by economic interests.”*<sup>181</sup>

Political possibilities in Asia were considered narrow and complicated. Although some European countries had interests and strategies in Asia, but the EU as a whole lacked a common approach. Gradually, as the ASEM process matured, the political dialogue has become significant dimension of the partnership. At the beginning, Asian participants were reluctant to include political pillar in the ASEM cooperation content fearing the sensitive issues would distract the summit. However, due to strong European emphasis, political pillar – ranging from such matters as international affairs, security issues to human rights and environmental problems – was included.

The current Asia Strategy from 2001 highlights cooperation in politics and security, trade and investment, poverty reduction, promotion of human rights, democracy, good governance and rule of law. In addition, the EU aims at building partnerships with Asian countries on global issues. ASEAN was re-identified as a key economic and political partner for the EU, and as *“a locomotive for overall relations between Asia and Europe”*.<sup>182</sup>

*“The ASEM security agenda is contested with asymmetries”*.<sup>183</sup> The three regions, the EU, U.S. and Asia might be roughly equal in economic terms, but not in military terms. While the U.S. as a superpower finds itself in the centre of global security agenda, the EU is involved in different security arrangements, ASEAN only recently embarked on establishing an ASEAN Security Community. The ARF is developing security cooperation in the region, but without

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. P. 34

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. P.35

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. P.48



specific agreements as yet. Many Asian countries have bilateral security arrangements with the U.S. While traditional security is handled multilaterally in such frameworks as NATO, OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), UN or ARF, ASEM was left with little more than a supporting role.

While at the beginning stage, ASEM tried to contribute to the global conflicts, such as North Korea, Afghanistan, Palestine and Western Balkans, at the later stage, it started to focus on non-tradition security issues. Transnational crime, migration, exploitation of women and children, trafficking in persons and drugs, and health issues have been discussed in the political pillar as “global threats of common concern”.<sup>184</sup> In 2000 ASEM started Anti-Money Laundering Initiative, a three-year program that provided with assistance to ASEM countries, was followed by Anti-money Laundering Workshop and the ASEM Symposium in Combating Underground Banking. This initiative, started a trend of cooperation concentrating on “soft security” including: Anti-Corruption Initiative at ASEM3, Initiative to Combat Trafficking Women and Children endorsed at ASEM3, the Child Welfare Initiative endorsed at ASEM2, ASEM Migration Contact Points started in 2002, ASEM Cooperation on HIV/Aids control, Euro-Asian Network for the Monitoring and Control of Communicable Diseases etc. Since then, ASEM process has been perceived as informal arena, where partners can share regional experiences in soft security issues, such as peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and security issues.

ASEM did not want to compete or duplicate the security agenda of other multilateral fora, as mentioned above, ARF, NATO, OSCE or UN. Instead, it avoided “hard security” matters, and such issues as Taiwan-China Cross-strait relations, or the crisis of Aceh and Mindanao were never discussed in ASEM.<sup>185</sup> Inter-regional cooperation was intended to deal with global issues, which would differ it from ASEAN-EU dialogue tackling region-specific issue, and ARF’s addressing topic-specific issues.

Moreover, many initiatives were proposed, particularly related to peacekeeping, enhancing transparency, human security and good governance, some of them have been initiated

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<sup>184</sup> Term used in ASEM, “Chairman's Statement of the Third Asia-Europe Meeting,” (Seoul2000).[http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans\\_statement\\_asem\\_3.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans_statement_asem_3.pdf) (last retrieved on Oct. 26<sup>th</sup> 2011)

<sup>185</sup> “ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities.” P.57

but not endorsed; many of activities lacked follow-up and continuity. The problem was little public information provided by partners on the development of the projects; hence many of them were forgotten after the endorsement. The dialogue on “global issues of common interests” has been criticized as lacking a clear, common vision and long-term action plan<sup>186</sup>.

On the other hand, ASEM dialogue on different security issues reflects the general trend of the widening of security concept. Traditional security concept has gone through evolution since the Cold War, expanding to political, economic, social and environment dimensions. As noted by Jurgen Ruland, ASEM’s focus on non-traditional security issues reflected the convergence of interests of both Asia and Europe. ASEM could become a significant contributor to global multilateral negotiations by innovatively agenda-setting.<sup>187</sup>

The security pillar has attracted majority of academic attention. Jurgen Ruland claimed that ASEM’s value lies in its ability to become “*an Asia-European clearing-house for global multilateral meetings, where partners could agree on agendas, objectives and solutions*”.<sup>188</sup>

Yet, so far, ASEM partners have not expressed a strong will to achieve common position in a systematic way. Christopher Dent also pointed out the lack of coordinated approach to multilateral institution; hence ASEM has been unable to become a real “multilateral utility”.<sup>189</sup> Julie Gilson saw ASEM’s value in its potential to serve as “minilateral” forum, which allows smaller groups to cooperate for multilateral institutions. In the long-term these partnership could become semi-permanent mechanism, which would help to sustain effective multilateralism in the international order.<sup>190</sup>

With its modest start, the political pillar has successfully grown into a central component of the cooperation. Political dialogue was intended to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability and development of mutual understanding in Asia and Europe. ASEM fit in the

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. P. 59

<sup>187</sup> Jürgen Ruland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to keep ASEM relevant?," in *Ten Years of ASEM. International Conference on Achievements and Possibilities of the Asia-Europe Meeting* (University of Helsinki2005).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. P.8

<sup>189</sup> Christopher M. Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Interregionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 2 (2004).P. 7

<sup>190</sup> Julie Gilson, "The Political Pillar of ASEM: An Empty Promise?," in *Ten Yeas of ASEM Conference* (University of Helsinki2005).

Europeans' intention of rapprochement of European and Asian societies overcoming the difficult heritage of historical relations. Considering the diverse situations of the partners, ASEM managed to go beyond the sensitiveness and raise such controversial issues as human rights. Although the dialogue remained the sensitive character, it has provided important exchange of information and clarification of positions.

ASEM has succeeded in locating emerging niches in international security dialogue, and have managed to address majority of the issues. However, there appears a question about its depth and effectiveness.

#### **3.4.2.2. The Economic Pillar**

One of the motivations behind the creation of ASEM was to strengthen multilateral trade, investment, and business networking between Asia and Europe. From EU's point of view, ASEM was to secure European economic presence in Asia, particularly in the fear of losing the markets to the U.S. New Asia Strategy put emphasis on the role of economic matters overall to inter-regional relations, serving as the basis for wider partnership between Asia and Europe.

Economic conditions require most detailed presentation, however, due to the theme and scope of this study, only general introduction is offered in this section. The Asia-Europe cooperation in this sphere is intertwined with the progress of WTO negotiations, and also reflects other multilateral arrangements like of APEC, and global trends, such as financial crises. Financial matters are handled separately by the financial ministers' meetings.

ASEM was envisaged to be a facilitator for trade liberalization and promoter of greater trade and investment between the two regions. The economic pillar has shown the highest activity in terms of initiatives by partner countries. Among the most significant outcomes of ASEM economic cooperation there are: the Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP), the Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP) and the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF).

Avoiding going into complex details of assessments of TFAP, IPAP, and AEBF, this sections concludes the following characteristics of the second pillar's activities:

(1) trade flows between Asia and Europe have increased largely, as numbers indicate, the exports from EU to Asian partners of ASEM increased by 56% between 1995-2004, and from Asian ASEM countries to EU by 137%.<sup>191</sup>

(2) Yet, the FDI showed decreasing tendency, both from EU to Asian ASEM countries, as of vice versa.

(3) Despite the multilateral arrangements of ASEM, the bilateral ties kept strong independently from the ASEM framework, this is particularly true in cases of EU-China, EU-S. Korea.

(4) ASEAN although having its firm position in the trade relations with EU, was significantly weakened by the Asian financial crisis.

(5) Gradual emergence of the Asian regionalism trend or even “Asian community” was encouraged by EU who welcomes a more consolidated region-to-region cooperation and further economic integration between the two regions.

In overall, the economic pillar might have been the most anticipated cooperation field, at least in the first stage of ASEM. Later, the expectations have been lowered, as ASEM proved not to be able to increase trade flows directly. Instead it functions as a forum promoting transparency and increasing knowledge and interaction between the two regions. It is an informal dialogue based on a voluntary process, depending on the goodwill and peer pressure, rather than coordination mechanisms.

### **3.4.2.3. The Social/Cultural Pillar**

The so-called “third pillar”, being at the main focus of this study, is further analysed in the following chapter. This part gives an overview on how it is organized completing the three-pillar structure of ASEM.

Originally, the third pillar was designed to fit all of “cooperation in other areas”. It later evolved into the socio-cultural pillar, still encompassing everything that left out from the political and economic pillars, and it was attached primary attention to. At the forming phase, it

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<sup>191</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 108

was assumed that enhanced economic relations would condition intercultural dialogue between the regions, not vice versa.

Moreover, the “fuzziness” of the pillar’s content, covering from culture, technology, human resources, education, development, health, environmental issues, anti-drugs, anti-terrorism and anti-international crime activities, made it “one size fits all”- kind of dust bin. However, over the time, the socio-cultural cooperation has gradually evolved into attaining most substantial results of all three pillars.<sup>192</sup>

It is essential to mention the role of the Madrid European Council meeting on 15-16 December 1995 which clarified the EU’s position on the Europe-Asia Meeting. During this meeting, it was stressed that more attention should be paid to the cultural, and information exchange, as well as wider socio-cultural cooperation. The exchange between intellectuals, businessmen, and people who affect public opinion has been identified to be an important part of political collaboration.

The first time EU referred to the term “social and cultural field” was in “Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process” from 1997. The document suggested that the key objectives of the field were to build of key networks, disseminate of information to the public, and support for ASEM. The following document “Perspectives and Priorities for ASEM Process into the Next Decade” from 2000 indicated the relevance of informal dialogue and networking in the settings of globalization, where enhanced awareness and understanding between the two regions should be balanced in all three dimensions. It also highlighted the protection and promotion of cultural heritage as the priority area.<sup>193</sup> This is to say that in terms conceptualization of the socio-cultural pillar, the EU stand had its contribution.

Over the years, the agenda initially regarded as “cooperation in various fields” have gradually balanced and gained clearer focus. Some of the fields have been moved over to the political dialogue, including issues related to combating drugs and illegal activities. With multiple projects on overarching fields, it has successfully exercised the Asia-Europe global governance in “soft issues”, and has gained growing attention.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. P. 111-112.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. P. 112

### 3.3.3. Institutional management of ASEM

*“The intentional informal, open character of the dialogue has allowed ASEM to be both positively multi-dimensional and negatively miscellaneous in its approach”.*<sup>194</sup>

If to summarize ASEM institutional organization in one word, I would suggest the word “hybridization” would fit the best. Integrating many organising cultures into one table, the nature of ASEM can be a cause of frustration to some, while the flexibly offering advantage at the procedural level appears attractive to others. An adequate naming of ASEM as: *“an expandable box of opportunities’, limited in legalistic terms, but highly adaptable, multidimensional and all-encompassing”.*<sup>195</sup>

The overall composition of ASEM consists of three dimensions: a vertical pillar structure, a matrix of interconnected initiatives, and a horizontal actor dimension. The pillar-type of formation resembles the arrangements in the EU’s Maastricht Treaty of 1992. The pillars are coordinated at the top by the Summit, consisting of heads of states, foreign ministers, and senior officials.

The plethora of ASEM initiatives are the second dimension. The so-called “laundry list” or “the Christmas tree” phenomena describes the tendency of multiple and dispersed initiatives. Paul Lim went a step further detecting *“initiatives as institutions take a life of their own” and resist reform or termination although found inadequate*.<sup>196</sup> The “net” structure of performed events and activities was invented to prevent the proliferation of initiatives to lose the focus or direction. Moreover, it is to create synergy and connectivity among the three pillars, rather than allowing the initiatives to work isolated from one another. The Asian financial crisis contributed to the realization among ASEM partners that there is an intrinsic link between economic and social issues, and the importance of the cross-pillar cooperation.

The third dimension is the horizontal process with trans-regional tier (The EU as European representative, APT as the “Asian part of ASEM”), an intergovernmental layer and a non-state level, which includes parliaments, NGOs, civil society, and private sector. Variety of

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid. P.70

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. P. 157

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. P. 176



actors involves variety of interests and position attached to the ASEM process. The EU position, although as the most coherent actor, is not homogenic either due to the different members' view on the role of ASEM. Inclusion of track-two actors into dialogue among governments amplifies the diversity of interests and objectives towards ASEM, and therefore, the focus of the process.

ASEM's ramification leads to the numerous challenges to the process itself. The characteristics of ASEM process are as following:

- high-level,
- multi-dimentional,
- evolutionary dialogue process of
- open,
- transparent,
- informal and
- un-institutionalized nature.

In the intention of members, it is a partnership between equals, aiming at enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation between Asia and Europe. It is also precedence both in the EU's external relations, as well as occupying atypical place in ASEAN external relations.

In terms of contradictory character of the process, ASEM is not institutionalized yet at the same time formalised and even bureaucratic. Dialogue are intentionally informal and do not aim to produce new agreements, treaties or contracts. It is increasingly hoping to produce concrete and substantial results, but underlines its non-binding character. It is "torn" between two-directional process of top-down high-level meetings, and bottom-up participation of civil societies, NGOs, and private sector. Apparently the informality and non-binding manner come from so called "ASEAN-Way", but it is EU that has been the strongest advocate of this approach in ASEM, strongly resisting institutionalization.<sup>197</sup>

Informality has been recognized as the main contribution from the Asian side to the organization, and the "Asia-style" approach, a transmission of ASEAN Way, to the ASEM partnership is acknowledged by the EU. At the same time, this informality has been criticized as

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. P. 154



“‘culturalism’ and the dichotomization of Asia and Europe”<sup>198</sup>, arguing on the over-emphasis on distinct Asian and Western approaches.

The EU plays an important role in providing institutional scheme of institutional arrangements for ASEM. A general characteristic of the conduct of all relations with Asia is that the political and institutional practices follow the logic of the EU’s pillar system and the division of external relations into the ‘first pillar’ relations covering above all economic and development policies (and in general, all other EU competences within external relations with the exception of the CFSP) and into the ‘second pillar’ issues covering the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). This division is reflected in the conduct of EU-Asia relations in the sense that the Commission is – in general – the key actor as far as the economic and development policy issues in these relations are concerned”.<sup>199</sup> As the process of operation went on, the first pillar was dedicated to political-security, second pillar turned to be economic cooperation, and the third was later developed into socio-cultural.

### **3.4. Summarizing ASEAN and ASEM’s institutional characteristics**

First of all, ASEAN and ASEM function on different levels, carry dissimilar missions, and involve different types of outcome. There are, however some common traits. First: the very ASEAN – the presence of the ten Southeast Asian states in both institutions, and second: they are both being frequently criticised for ineffectiveness. Perhaps the third similarity would be the three-pillar structure that has been intentional in ASEM since its beginning, and is currently gradually clarifying in ASEAN.

The reason behind criticism probably relates to the first similarity – the common presence of ASEAN. What originated from the Association, the “ASEAN Way” as the *modus operandi*, has been transferred to ASEM (sometimes named “Asian Way” instead). Thus, informality, avoidance of legally binding arrangements, “soft institutionalization” is characteristic for both multilateral institutions and has caused frustration for many observers who expect higher effectiveness in terms of procedural outcomes of respectively regional and trans-regional governance.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. P. 158

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. P. 138-139

As mentioned earlier, this loose character of institutional design was voluntary and agreed upon by all members since the inception both of ASEAN and ASEM. Even in the case of inter-regional forum, where the scope of members is much more diverse, and to majority of whom the “ASEAN Way” is an unfamiliar working style, it has been become a default style. Apparently, the “soft institutionalization” is the contribution of ASEAN into the ASEM inter-regional dialogue. The European working format has also affected the organization of ASEM, which is exemplified by the three-pillar model of thematic cooperation.

This chapter has provided a description and an analysis of the historical conditions and political environment that originated the multilateral arrangements of ASEAN and the ASEAN-EU relations, as well as ASEM processes. It has also explained organizations’ nature, working style and institutional arrangements. To lead to the dissertation’s main focus – the cultural dimension of cooperation — the last part portrayed the third pillars of ASEAN Community and ASEM that are responsible for the cultural agenda of the processes.

Institutional design does affect the nature of cooperation, especially when it comes to the realization of their initial goals, one of our main indicators of the nature of cooperation. The elements of institutional design to be considered, as depicted in the above sections can be summarized as the following:

1. Membership
2. Scope
3. Formal rules
4. Norms and ideology
5. Mandate

Sources of continuity and change in institutional design:

1. Type of cooperation problem
2. Number of actors
3. Identity
4. Systematic and sub-systematic power distribution
5. Domestic politics
6. Extra-regional institutions and non-state actors
7. History<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Amitav Acharya and Alastair I. Johnston, *Crafting cooperation : regional international institutions in comparative perspective* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). P. 247-261

Parallel structure of analysis was adopted to explain both intra-regional and inter-regional developments, showing that both dynamics were influenced by the same factors: the Cold War, restructuring world order after the Cold War, as well as new challenges of globalization of economy and security. The exceptional conditions that created and shaped the cooperation frameworks, also affected the nature of these processes. The literature review section exposed existing criticism towards both ASEAN and ASEM functionality. This part, revealing the origins of the processes, explains the weaknesses and conditionality of these institutions.

The unfavourable conditions that gave birth to ASEAN reflected not only its existence, but also got transmitted to its multilateral extensions, like ARF, APT, and ASEM. Informality, institutional minimalism, consultation style of negotiations, and lack of legally-binding, as well as compliance mechanisms spread out from the “ASEAN Way” to “Asian Way”. That working style originated from the Southeast Asian cultural norms has been popularized, accepted throughout the region as well in the trans-regional forum. Like it or hate it, the fact might be well considered a contribution from ASEAN institutional model. Nevertheless, with the changing conditions and new challenges, it is highly anticipated that both ASEAN and ASEM can up-date their institutional model to enhance their effectiveness and sustain their credentials and relevance in the regions and in global politics.

As much as ASEM adopted the ASEAN style it also offered innovative agenda and forms of cooperation. That includes the cultural cooperation and creating a platform of communicating the cultures, thoughts and habits of each of members, not only on the leaders’ level but also to include the people who actually represent the culture.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **NORMS, VALUES AND IDENTITY- THE VALUE OF DIALOGUING**

This chapter explains the modules of cooperation of the Asia Europe Meeting. It examines how does ASEM work and what are the process of agenda setting and negotiation. This analysis is to answer the research question number one for this chapter: What are the factors affecting effectiveness of the ASEM process? To what extend norms affect the effectiveness of an inter-regional organization like ASEM that encompasses such a diverse group of members? Through this analysis, this chapter outlines the ASEAN personality and its ability of communicating norms and values to external actors, in this case, the EU in particular.

This chapter addresses specifically the inter-regional level of analysis, deliberating about the norms and identity as distinctive features of “region” and also conceptualizing the definition of what encompass of a “region” as well.

**inter-regional level - regional identity formation;**

ASEM is unique arrangements for the Asian and European leaders as well as the peoples to interact and learn about one another, but also about themselves. This learning process, as I argue contributes to the cognitive regionalism and building regional identity, or at least, affiliation. Recognition, perception and interaction are crucial in this process.

## Awakening

- Learning (first contact)
- Differentiating

The second part of this chapter continues the discussion on norms and takes it to the level of identity. Recognition of distinctiveness and similarities contribute to the feeling of affiliation or polarization. The Asia-Europe setting interestingly illustrates both. Hence, the second part of this chapter will treat regional identity as a process of social communication where interaction process takes central role in mutual learning and building own regional identity.

### **4.1. Asia-Europe Meeting as the dialogue between norms, values and modules of cooperation**

On the inter-regional level, apparent differences surface, making them not only obstacles of cooperation, but also a kind of the reference points for defining who is whom and who is not whom. This chapter examines the role of norms' differences in the inter-regional dialogue. It looks at the communication difficulties that the process experiences due to the diverse spectrum of its members. It asks the question about the effectiveness of communication in the process by looking at institutional arrangements and culture of cooperation in Asia and Europe contexts. Perceptions and values are taken into consideration, as they affect the process and also outcomes of meetings. Issues like culture, values, norms and understanding in the politics affect the perceptions, understanding (or misunderstanding) and values affect the inter-regional

cooperation. ASEM is the only political cooperation mechanism where culture factor comes to the forefront of the organization's purpose.

This section explores the importance of culture as a factor in the political dialogue between the regions. It looks at the effectiveness of ASEM through the lenses of cultures of cooperation distinctive to Asian and European members. From a very highly anticipated forum that could have had great potential of global governance to an expanding organization beyond Asia and Europe, but with little impact. While horizontally it kept growing in size, vertically, its impact remains (or even become more) shallow.

This chapter addresses both dimensions of recognition and differentiating of the cognitive model I suggest. The analysis of norms and cooperation styles is complemented by an inquiry about the development of regional identities through ASEM framework. The following section continues the discussion about norms and their role in defining regions.

Distinctiveness of norms and cooperation cultures is connected to the concept of regional identity. Often created on the basis of binary and contrast, regional identity underlines the differentiation. The Asia-Europe Meeting, by its nature of naming the regions, contributes to the discourse of region-building through Self-Other juxtaposition. The final section of this chapter shall explore the process of regional identity creation in the context of Asia meeting Europe.

#### **4.1.1. ASEAN Way versus European institutionalism/ ASEAN norms in the Asia-Europe context**

As discussed in the previous chapter, ASEAN possesses a certain distinctiveness of the political and cultural norms that affects its cooperation mechanism. This chapter look at those characteristic norms in the context of effectiveness of the inter-regional cooperation of Asia-Europe.

In addressing norms in international relations, this study refers to the discourse of social constructivism. Stefan Rother in "Wendt meets East" (2012) discusses possibilities of applying Western theories to non-Western International Relations studies and he takes into consideration specific historical, ideational and cultural contexts.

Based on Alexander Wendt's concepts of social constructivism, he argues that collective identity can manifest itself in distinctive logics of cultures of anarchy. These are based on norms of conflict and cooperation that are established through interaction, can be proposed by outside agents and localized, or can be affected by the re-negotiation of state identity cause by domestic events. Cultural path dependencies like norms rooted in the cultural memory or consciousness of a region should not be ignored in analyzing models of cooperation. Social constructivism, proposed by Alexander Wendt, brings some modification to the conventional constructivism by introducing the notion of 'cultures of anarchy'.<sup>201</sup>

Constructivism is chosen because it is more flexible and less based on preconceived notions than the other major schools in international relations. It sees the core characteristics and behavior of states as not given, but socially constructed. And while it is based on Western thoughts, it acknowledges that there is possible existence of other logics of anarchy.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has gained attention from scholars because of the 'cultural' factor. The Asian economic growth in the 1990s has led some politicians to believe that some set of 'Asian values' were the guiding principle behind their regionalization success. ASEAN has a particular role in this discourse, representing a form of successful political exercise, where "Western" theories of international relations do not necessarily exhaust.

The ASEAN Way in particular that represents a set of conduct that Amitav Acharya described as "*not so much about the substance or structure of multilateral interactions, but a claim about the process, through which such interactions are carried out.*"<sup>202</sup>

This study also underlines the importance of interaction, not only within ASEAN, but also beyond, in this particular case, the Asia-Europe inter-regional dialogue. To understand the nature, challenges and contribution of the process of interaction, norms and characteristics of ASEAN and ASEAN Way, which was able to be transmitted beyond ASEAN, are discussed. To

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<sup>201</sup> Stefan Rother, "Wendt meets East: ASEAN cultures of conflict and cooperation," *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no. 1 (2012). P. 51

<sup>202</sup> Acharya, "Ideas, identity and institution-building: From the 'ASEAN Way' to the 'Asia-Pacific Way?'. " P. 329



use Acharya's argumentation again, "*theoretical work on Asian regionalism continues to ignore local, national, or regional political context central to those writing on Asian regionalism.*"<sup>203</sup>

In the case of ASEAN it is particularly apparent that social and cultural norms are intertwined with political and organizational ones. In the Southeast Asian context, one can say that "*cultures of anarchy are what regional organizations make out of them.*"<sup>204</sup> Regional organizations take up the role of defining the region by the expanse of their members and the norms and rules that are adopted. Moreover, the nature of the region is frequently determined by the ideas and beliefs that extra and intra-regional actors have about themselves as well.

Following Amitav Acharya's categorization to legal-rational norms and socio-cultural norms, this section has shown how in case of ASEAN the both types of norms are inter-related. The diversity among ASEAN states has been often mentioned as the hampering factor for the regionalism process. Acharya phrased it this way: "*Since cultural and political homogeneity could not serve as an adequate basis for regionalism, the latter has to be constructed through interaction.*"<sup>205</sup> ASEAN norms are the mix of social, cultural, and political milieu.

Because of the important role of norms in the ASEAN's organization, working style that determined Association's personality and identity, constructivism has been favoured approach to understand ASEAN's version of regionalism (Acharya 2000, 2001, Ba 2009<sup>206</sup>). Amitav Archarya has defined shared norms in ASEAN that create regional community. Alice Ba also stressed the importance of norms and norm development, but focusing on the process of **interactive dialogues** that create the norms<sup>207</sup>. And those cultural norms, characteristic for village societies were translated into institutional norms, strong adhered to throughout over 40 years of Association's existence. Together with common strategic interests, which simply could

<sup>203</sup> Amitav Acharya, "Why is there no NATO in Asia? The normative origins of Asian multilateralism," *Weatherhead Working Paper* 5(2005).

<sup>204</sup> Rother, "Wendt meets East: ASEAN cultures of conflict and cooperation." P. 57

<sup>205</sup> Acharya, *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia : ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. P.47

<sup>206</sup> Amitav Acharya, *The quest for identity : international relations of Southeast Asia* (Singapore ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Acharya, *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia : ASEAN and the problem of regional order*; Alice D. Ba, *(Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia : region, regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, Studies in Asian security (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>207</sup> Cockerham, "Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way." P. 167

be summarized as sovereignty protection, they have provided “*driving force behind the choice and development of ASEAN institutionalization*”.<sup>208</sup>

As shall be discussed in the following section, not only organizational norms differentiate the Asian and European groupings. It is often the issue of goal and content of the cooperation that bring controversies. The most contentious, and outstanding at the same time, is the different attitudes towards human rights. Upon this example of addressing the human rights I shall show the value of socialization process in this Asia-Europe dialogue.

#### **4.1.2. Conflicting cooperation cultures**

In discussing the dialogue between the civilizations and regions, cooperation culture refers to the norms of cooperation that are formally and informally expressed within an international or regional institution. Cooperation cultures are embedded in different political, social, economic and historical contexts which have a significant impact on the way states cooperate or behave towards each other. Two types of norms are distinguished:

- (1) regulatory which shape the actors' behavior, and
- (2) constitutive which express actors' identities.<sup>209</sup>

Different cooperation norms and culture exists and they have an effect on the way actors form different (regional) institutions behave towards each other, thereby influencing the course and nature of policy interaction and ideological debates. In assuming that there are different cooperation cultures, there is an expectation that the nature and effectiveness of inter-regional cooperation would be affected by them too. In other words, there are three components that are affected by that difference:

- (1) attitude/ perception of the actors in the dialogue;
- (2) the institutional arrangements of cooperation; and

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. P. 169

<sup>209</sup> Howard Loewen, "Democracy and Human Rights in the European-Asian Dialogue: A Clash of Cooperation Cultures?," *German Institute of Global Area Studies Working Paper* 92(2008).

(3) the issue/agenda of the cooperation upon which both sides need to agree upon and commit to.

The Asia-Europe Meeting, like no other institution, has “married” the European and Asian cooperation styles. Empirical study proves that there are antagonistic cooperation principles between Asian style favoring informality, non-binding agreements and negotiation; whereas European style favors high level of institutionalization, legally-binding agreements and outcome-oriented approach. In other words, the Asian Way (which is an extension of the ASEAN Way by expanding membership of East Asian regional groupings adopting the ASEAN working format) is juxtaposed with the EU cooperation style as following:

Table 12: Most discussed distinctive norms in Asian and European cooperation cultures

Asian (ASEAN) Way	EU Way
<b>Informality</b>	Formality
<b>Non-legally binding/ negotiated</b>	Legally binding: treaties
<b>Intergovernmental/ noninterference</b>	Supranational

Source: Author's compilation

While the Europeans put emphasis on the performance, the Asians (particularly Southeast Asian) underlined to value of informal consultation. Performance of regional actors is shaped by the institutional set-up as well as by the political will of its member states. In the case of ASEM, the EU finds it particularly difficult to compromise on the format of work it has not been accustomed to. Performance and outcome-driven style of European cooperation is replaced by lengthy socializing dialogues of Asians who are more interested in working on **bridge-building** than using it to get to a destination. However, ASEAN, as mentioned in the chapter three in the section of Institutional Development, never sought for a formal process that rests on an

international legal contract. The founding document, the Bangkok Declaration, in a two-page long statement reconfirmed informal principles and norms, rather than a treaty with obligations and sanctions.

To understand the processes of cooperation, that includes intra-regional (ASEAN), as inter-regional (ASEM), it is important to look at institutional design as a measurement of the degree to which the institution and its design help explain the nature of cooperation. By institutional design, I mean those formal and informal rules and organizational features that constitute the institution and that function as either the constraints on actor choice or the bare bones of the social environment within which agents interact, or both.<sup>210</sup>

Following the constructivists' view of Amitav Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston, "(...) Weak regimes might derive some legitimacy from high-profile, but intentionally weakened institutions."<sup>211</sup> That said, the insecure the regimes tend to be less intrusive are their regional institutions, which equals limited degree of institutionalization, so called soft institutionalism.<sup>212</sup>

The ASEAN Way emphasizes multilateral interaction, in which high degree of discreteness, informality, pragmatism, expediency, consensus-building, and non-confrontational bargaining styles.<sup>213</sup> Inclusiveness of the Track II was not new to ASEAN either. Because of the informal character, Track Two, involving academics, military, think tanks and other civil society actors were included in consultation committees. Under the preconditions of informality of cooperation, the role of the Track Two has a special meaning.

The questions and problems that were problematic or could not be resolved by mutual agreement, shifted to the unofficial level of dialogue, where they can take some more time to reach consensus upon. Once such a consensus is reached, they resurface on the official agenda of Track One process. Track II was also useful for ASEM to avoid political tensions at the official level. Controversial issues such as human rights, labor relations, governance and Asian security

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<sup>210</sup> Amitav Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston, "Comparing regional institutions: an Introduction," in *Crafting Cooperation : Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, New York,: Cambridge University Press, 2007). P.15-16

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. P. 19

<sup>212</sup> Acharya and Johnston, *Crafting cooperation : regional international institutions in comparative perspective*. P.262

<sup>213</sup> Acharya, "Ideas, identity and institution-building: From the 'ASEAN Way' to the 'Asia-Pacific Way?'. " P. 329

were to be informally discussed in order to avoid a collision on ideological ground. The Asia-Europe Foundation took the leading role in organizing informal seminars on human rights that involved government representatives, academics and NGOs. The pluralisation of actors and the role of ASEF in it shall be discussed in the next chapter.

However, the categorization and clear division of tasks between the Track One and Two are not always clear in the ASEAN case. The way of “juggling” between the tracks is transparent to the people involved, hence, making the negotiation and working character very customary and based on unwritten tradition of the group.

This is connected to the tradition of decision making in the village structure of Southeast Asia, and it puts emphasis on the familiarity, consultation and socialization. From a cultural point of view, only the elderly or acknowledged by the society people had access to such a group and decision making were not open to the outsiders or new-comers. This explains the long-lasting process of trust-building and socialization by the government leaders who take their time to feel comfortable in each other’s company, let alone to negotiate or debate with each other.

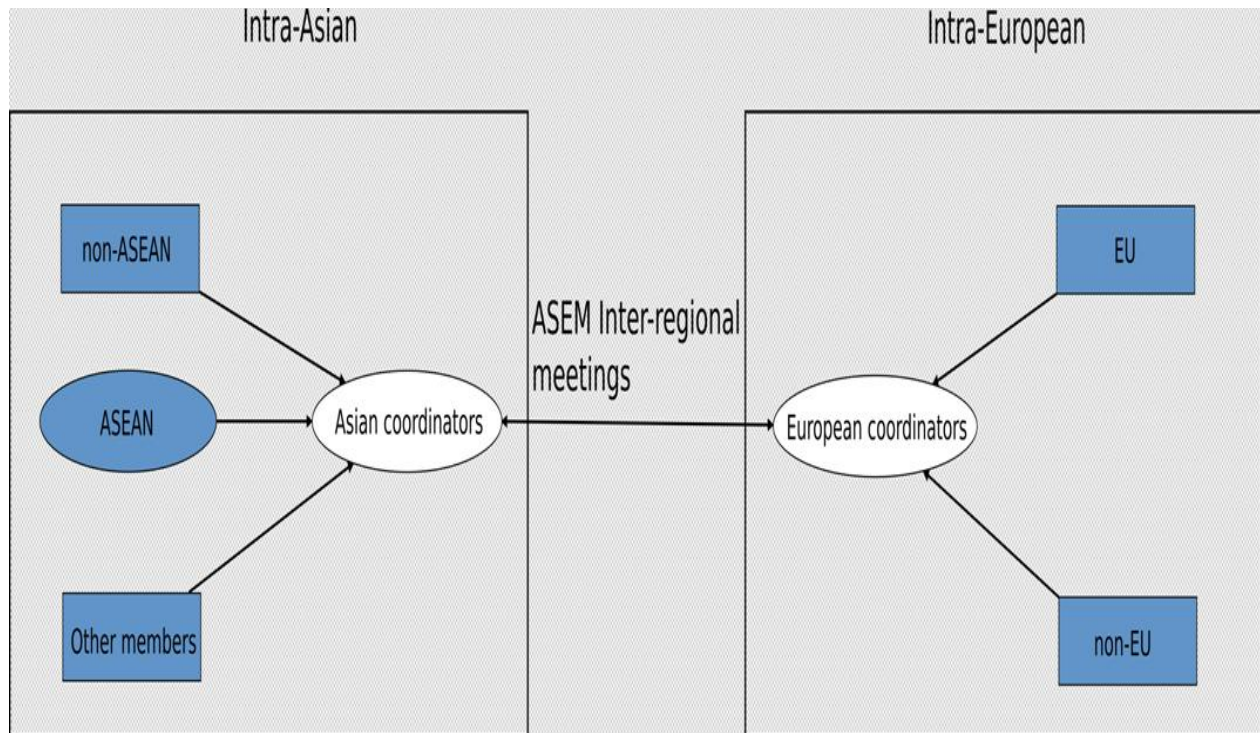
Weak institutionalization and the lack of legalization of the ASEAN process go together with the emphasis on personal contacts and relations among the decision-makers. This is connected to the tradition of patronage networks, where informal and personalized political patterns, influenced by the dominance of particular leaders.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Mely Caballero-Anthony, *Regional Security in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005). P. 72-78



Graph 9: Socialization effect of pre-summit in the ASEM process



Source: Author's analysis based on ASEM documents

Due to collegial style of Asian diplomacy, the mechanisms of intra-Asian coordination are undertaken informally. In many cases leaders attending to the meetings have built long-term relations with other participants, making the meetings in a familiar atmosphere.

The task of the Asian coordinators (Group of Coordinators) is representing the Asian partners in the meeting and to negotiate with the European side. The double responsibility of coordinating the intra- and inter-regional negotiations makes them a vital agent of Asian regionalism.

The preference of 'quiet diplomacy' and informality comes from the ASEAN's practice. While in the ASEAN context it may have cemented interstate peace, it creates significant obstacles to developing regional oversight on issues such as human rights, where non-intervention runs against the enforcement of norms within the domestic political sphere of member states. Similar logics apply to the ASEM process. While 'quiet diplomacy' is enforced by ASEAN, accepted by other Asian and also European partners, it brings not much beyond

creating comfort of meeting. On the other hand, it is already an achievement for the groups that previously had no habit of even informal regular meetings.

According to the ASEAN Way – it is informal way that things get done. Meeting before meeting: (e.g. breakfasts of leaders) where they agree upon “strategies” or at least on not contradicting each other. So for ASEM, the leaders of ASEAN would need to consult on issues debated before bringing them up in front of other audience – One can interpret it as a proof of common tactics.

Traditional approach to thinking about socialization efforts is to emphasize the importance of courts and hierarchy more generally, where one body sits in a position of power relative to another, and uses that position to enforce particular standards. This is suitable of the EU context. From a conceptual angle, the failure of ASEAN to socialize member states is often assumed to be a failure to develop conditionality politics. Criticism about the political format of ASEAN has a conceptual foundation underpinning it, which is particular and limits our ability to accurately perceive what ASEAN is doing wrong.

Conditionality is not the only way to understand socialization efforts. There is a strong parallel between the usages of public pronouncements. According to Thomas Risse, rhetorical action is an interim point between brute bargaining behaviors between actors such as displayed through conditionality and communicative action, where all sides are engaged in a true commitment to learn from each other.<sup>215</sup>

Rhetorical action does not necessarily rest on an enforcement organ utilizing its position of empowerment to legally censure offending states. In the absence of conditionality, an organization can still use the elevated position of joint statements in the name of that organization to forward statements of unalterable belief with the desire to condition a behavioral response. Rhetorical action is designed to convince actors to ‘mend their ways’ without material rewards or punishments and rests upon the use of language to convey information and preferences. ASEAN’s action resembles such an understanding of socialization.

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<sup>215</sup> Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue! Rhetorical Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000).



Socialization might not be a rule for the European style of cooperation, but the EU has come to the terms with this format within the ASEM framework. Whether the European partners are happy or not with such a *modus operandi*, ASEAN has successfully incepted the consultation format. *“The EU’s behaviour and normative ambitions are modified through interaction with Asian states in an institution such as ASEM. These elements are closely related to identity, the third yardstick for legitimacy.”*<sup>216</sup> Socialization goes both ways. The following section shall showcase the socializing effect in terms of content on the Asian partners.

#### 4.1.3. Clashing over human rights issues

The early phase of inter-regional dialogue was problematic on the essential issues of human rights. The human rights issues elevated to priority in external relations starting in 1991, when at ASEAN-EC conference for foreign ministers in Luxemburg. The EU’s emphasis on the adherence to human rights and promoting democratization processes become the key component in its external relations. After the EU’s sanctions against the People’s Republic of China over the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, ASEAN took that message as the conditionality of relations were put on the human rights issues. It reacted strongly on the sanctions as interference in domestic affairs during the Post-ministerial Conference in 1990. The following East Timor annexation by Indonesia and strong position of Portugal in blocking further negotiations with ASEAN did not help the ongoing dispute over culturally specific and historically contingent understanding of human rights.<sup>217</sup>

The Asian side was particularly sensitive about the conditionality of EU’s intentions. Not only ASEAN-EU relations suffered from this obstacle, but early ASEM was also affected by this gridlock. At the beginning stage of ASEM, Summit 1 and Summit 2, the European insisted on including human rights in the agenda. At the inaugural ASEM Summit there were human rights mentioned, but they were omitted in the following Summit.<sup>218</sup> Caught in such conflicting

<sup>216</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 157

<sup>217</sup> Loewen, "Democracy and Human Rights in the European-Asian Dialogue: A Clash of Cooperation Cultures?." P. 14

<sup>218</sup> Toshiro Tanaka, "Asia-Europe relations: the birth and development of ASEM," *Keio Journal of Politics* 10(1999). P. 38; and Paul Lim, *The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process : issues for ASEM III*, Briefing papers (Brussels: European Institute for Asian Studies, 1999). P. 5

settings, the EU was forced to use ‘quiet diplomacy’. Some members, who felt particularly strong about human rights, chose “constructive abstention” and avoided ASEM Summit, like Denmark, Sweden, Spain and Greece in 1996.<sup>219</sup>

As mentioned in the historical background chapter, one of the main reasons for slow-down in the evolution of ASEAN-EU relations was the issue of human rights. Although the EU-ASEAN rapprochement reaches back to 1980s, little was happening until 1991. The EU was too preoccupied with constructing the Single European Market. Moreover and at the deeper level, the EU had trouble with finding a suitable approach towards ASEAN. An academic observer, Anthony Foster summed up the relations as following:

*“On the one hand, the EU contact with Southeast Asia had been based upon a ‘basic philosophy of regionalism as a structural principle of international relation.’ On the other hand, there was a growing concern in Europe about ‘treating ASEAN as a region’.”*<sup>220</sup>

The morality of human rights based on European values was conditionalizing the EU’s external relations. And the dilemma was that ASEAN had its own conception of eligibility of accession for new members based on its own ‘mental map’ of the region of Southeast Asia. As the EU committed itself to consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, ASEAN found such attitude divisive, controversial and that has become the underlined differences in values and agenda of the two regional organizations.

The creation of ASEM has brought new hope to the tensions relations between Asia and Europe. Under the clause of equality, the Asian participants demanded that ASEM does not turn to be a forum of moral reproach or confrontation. They insisted that “sensitive, controversial and irrelevant issues” should be avoided. Therefore, problems such as East Timor issue, considered by Indonesia irrelevant to ASEM, were not brought to the forum. ASEAN insisted in focusing first on the issues that *“bring us together rather than issues that divide us.”*<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 780

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. P. 792 Followed the quotes from: Manfred Mols, "Cooperation with ASEAN: a success story," in *Europe's Global Links: The European Community and Inter-regional Cooperation*, ed. G. Edwards and E. Regelsberger (London: Pinter, 1990).

<sup>221</sup> Interview, ASEAN Secretariat Official, Jakarta, June 2012.

The Bangkok meeting was successful in creating a good, non-confrontational and constructive chemistry among the leaders that translated into enthusiasm about the continuity of ASEM process. This case proves the effect of socialization through the process of successful rhetoric, causing a buy-in of declarations.

The wording of the Chairman's Statement from the first ASEM Summit was of extreme symbolic importance, hence, delicate matter. The contentious issues human rights were in limited reference (only twice); the suggested term of "non-interference" disappeared from the text, replaced by the softer phrase: "*in accordance with the rules of international law and obligations, non-intervention, whether direct or indirect, in each other's internal affairs*".<sup>222</sup> The ASEM First Chairman's Statement was worded accordingly:

*"The dialogue among the participating countries should be conducted on the basis of mutual respect, equality, promotion of fundamental rights and, in accordance with the rules of international law and obligations, non-intervention, whether direct or indirect, in each other's internal affairs."*<sup>223</sup>

However, the détente did not last for too long. Disagreement over the participation of Myanmar, whose human rights records were on the red-list of EU, in the ASEM process almost led to the cancellation of the Fifth Summit of ASEM in October 2004. Long discussions enabled a compromise between the European and the Asian side, resulting in finally accepting the membership of Myanmar. This case shows both (1) how norms and cooperation cultures matter in inter-regional cooperation, particularly when it comes to the human rights and democratization. It also showcases (2) the meaning of dialoguing and negotiating, that ASEAN proved to be persuasive enough to insist on Myanmar accession.

The dynamics of socialization was not always smooth and easy. The Asian partners insisted on not addressing issues that they were not comfortable with. Mahathir even threatened that ASEAN would boycott the ASEM Summit if Myanmar is not allowed to participate.<sup>224</sup> With consistent attitude of ASEAN seeking for constructive engagement with Myanmar, the EU has ceased criticism. While the first Summit tried to find a common position and perspective for

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<sup>222</sup> ASEM, "Chairman's Statement of the Asia-Europe Meeting," (Bangkok: ASEM, 1996).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. Point 5

<sup>224</sup> , *Far Eastern Economic Review* 25 September 1997.

interregional cooperation, the second revealed quite a disappointment in inability of reaching such. ASEM2, in the wake of Asian financial crisis, chose to be silent and not to mention human rights.<sup>225</sup>

I agree that consensus with Asian partners who insisted on that “constructive engagement” imply that EU has compromised its principles and beliefs for the sake of smooth cooperation and other benefits from the dialogue.

The rhetoric in ASEM documents changed with time. At the ASEM Third Summit in Seoul in 2000 the issues of human rights were referred to explicitly:

*“Leaders committed themselves to promote and protect all human rights, including the rights to development, and fundamental freedoms, bearing in mind their universal, invisible and interdependent character as expressed at the World Conference of Human Rights in Vienna.”*<sup>226</sup>

The following Summits showed a creation of customary of expression concerns about human rights situations. Myanmar was of special attention and has had a position in the Chairman’s Statements. By the time of ASEM 7, democracy and human rights are firmly rooted in the ASEM dialogue. The Statement from ASEM 7 openly recommended Myanmar government to engage stakeholders in an inclusive political process towards national reconciliation and called members to lift restrictions placed on political parties and release those under detention.<sup>227</sup> Of course, this could not have taken place out of already changing climate within ASEAN, who also opted for stronger position towards Myanmar and allowed public criticism.

Surin Pitsuwan reconfirmed the success of ASEAN’s constructive engagement giving that the credit for Myanmar’s political change:

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<sup>225</sup> Loewen, "Democracy and Human Rights in the European-Asian Dialogue: A Clash of Cooperation Cultures?."

<sup>226</sup> ASEM, "Chairman's Statement of the Third Asia-Europe Meeting." Point 8

<sup>227</sup> ASEM, "Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting," (Beijing2008). Point 2

*"It took us some time, but we have shown that our way is a good way. It's positive engagement that works, not punishments. Burma has change, the US attitude has changed. I believe that the EU will change soon too."*<sup>228</sup>

The element of **change** is very important in the reasoning of this dissertation and it leads to the second level of cognitive process I suggest. The issue of change in institutions of ASEM and ASEAN shall be further elaborated in the Chapter Six.

The changes within ASEAN political communication is reflected in the changes of rhetoric in ASEM. That proves the value of socializing, soft dialogue instead of hard one, and mutual learning. That transition shows that there has been communication of norms, not only internally, but also as an effect of interacting with external factors:

*"(...) norms that constitute a collective identity are not only constructed through interaction, but also through identity change at the domestic level and through localization of norms prevalent in the existing international system or as promoted by outside actors."*<sup>229</sup>

This case has shown the process of buy-in to the human rights norms through the habit of interacting and dialoguing.

To some observers one of negative sides of the Asia-Europe inter-regional process is that it has been unable to overcome the constraints from political differences. Lack of understanding and knowledge, mostly on European's part, or interests have hampered the process. The gap between Europe and Asia in terms of culture and interest can cause limitation of the dialogue. This is true in a number of official meetings Europeans share their experience in a form of lecturing Asians rather than exchanging information and opinions. This unidirectional dialogue *"may leave bitter aftertaste of European arrogance and ignorance"*.<sup>230</sup> The EU needs to remain sensitiveness towards Asian counterparts, also due to the legacy of colonial past, as well as past donor-recipients relationship. From Asian side, the complex coming from historical imbalance also needs to be overcome.

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<sup>228</sup> H.E. Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan speech, Kuala Lumpur November 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Rother, "Wendt meets East: ASEAN cultures of conflict and cooperation." P. 51

<sup>230</sup> Katja Freistein 2008, op. cit. P.226

This confirms the hypothesis number one, stating that cognitive gap between the regions is the main factor limiting the inter-regionalism.

#### **4.1.4. Norms' differences and the asymmetric relationship**

The asymmetry in the relationship has been reflected by the differences of values and norms. The new chapter of the ASEAN-EU relations was also marked with “clash over values”.<sup>231</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meetings in Manila and Luxemburg in 1991 and 1992 were overshadowed by the human rights and democracy clauses as a response to Indonesian and East Timor issue in 1991. In Asia there emerged the idea of Asian values as opposition to imposing Western universalism. Mohammed Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew's coined term of “Asian values” seen by many as an expression of collective nationalism or anti-post colonialism, in fact unintentionally strengthened ASEAN as a regional entity.

The central focal point easily causing disagreement is the issue of democracy and human rights. The European Union holds harsh criticism towards Myanmar and presses for actions. The EU insisted on excluding Myanmar due to extraordinary negative human rights records. Yet, Burma was accepted to ASEM process in ASEM 5 in 2004. The EU is dissatisfied with the ASEAN constructive engagement in terms of Myanmar case, and has pressed ASEAN to take actions towards the Burmese problem. The issue of human rights and Burma have been a hindrance in ASEAN-EU relations as well as in multilateral dialogue of ASEM since.<sup>232</sup>

On other hand, the EU played an important role in the development ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. As a result of EU-ASEAN Working Group meetings, the agenda of human rights have been successfully forwarded to the ASEAN governmental level. Joint Communiqué from the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Conference in Manila in 1998, ASEAN stated a necessity to establish appropriate mechanism on human rights. The process was followed by the establishment of ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children in 2004, as a part of Vientiane Action Plan 2004-2010. Further development of human rights

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<sup>231</sup> Jurgen Ruland 2001, op. cit. P. 18

<sup>232</sup> Maria Gabriela Manea “ Human rights and the inter-regional dialogue between Asia and Europe: ASEAN-EU relations and ASEM”, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 21 No. 3 July 2008: 369–396.



agenda in ASEAN was seen in Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, Vision 2020, and the ASEAN Charter.

This is not to say that the emergence of human rights issues in ASEAN is owing to the dialogue with Europe. However, certainly the inter-regional process had contribution in lobbying the human rights agenda, which has for long time caused disagreement within the ten member states. It is difficult to measure the impact of the EU-ASEAN relations on the human rights process of ASEAN, yet the EU's role appears clear in terms of experience for the human rights capacity building.<sup>233</sup>

While literature on civil society in democratization theory concentrates on national level, globalization and regionalism processes have drawn attention to the idea of “global civil society”. In the ASEM context, non-state actors facilitate the democratization of inter-regional relations. Although the process has been seen as elitist and of top-down character (Bersick 2008, Yeo 2002)<sup>234</sup>, the issue of participation of civil society has been visible in organization's agenda.

The member states disagreed from the beginning whether civil society should be included in the process, hence the civil society as actor were not conceptualized at the first ASEM summit in 1996 in Bangkok. Yet, with European governments and civil society pressing for ASEM to open up, initial success in breaking the resistance from Asian members (China was the major force of blocking), was reached in the summit 1998 in London. It was partial compromise, as the term “civil society” was replaced by “all sectors of society”.<sup>235</sup>

#### 4.1.5. East-West binary and the Asian Values discourse

The time when ASEM was created coincided with the economic boom of Asia and a boost of confidence among East Asian nations. The concept of Asian values gained political

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<sup>233</sup> Martina Timmermann “EU-Asia human rights policy: Pursuing the path of institutionalism” in: Jurgen Ruland, Gunter Schubert, Gunter Schucher and Cornelia Storz (eds.) 2008. *Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks of Global Governance?*

<sup>234</sup> Sebastian Bersick “The Democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: The role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments” in: Jurgen Ruland et al. eds. 2008, op. cit.; Yeo Lay Hwee *ASEM: The Asia-Europe Meeting Process: from Sexy Summit to Strong Partnership?*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs. 2002.

<sup>235</sup> Sebastian Bersick 2008, op. cit. P.246



attention from the 1992-3 by vocal expressions of Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir Mohamad. The general argument against Asian values has been that there is more diversity among Asian cultures, beliefs and socio-political conditions than commonalities.

Despite this fact, in this Asian values discourse there appear to be a commonality: the desire to create a new East Asian identity by fusing the best values and practices of the East, which can provide an alternative developmental and normative model for the world. Moreover, behind the rejection of Western liberalism there has been a conviction that the West in decline economically, politically and socially, while Asia is on the rise.<sup>236</sup> The ideas of “Asian values” underlined the differences between European and Asian nature of cooperation could have brought some negative implications on the ASEM dialogue.

Having that said, ASEM can be seen as a desire of Asian nations to create a framework for cooperation in which the questions of human rights and democracy would no longer possess the weight they did in the EU-ASEAN relations. Thus, the Asia-Europe Meeting has been driven by the principle of non-criticizing and avoidance of tackling the sensitive issues in a confronting way. In the early phase of ASEM, there was an agreement between the leaders not to address controversial issues of human rights and democracy at the official level. In this way, the thin balance of harmony would not be endangered and mutual learning and understanding were put ahead of “hard negotiations”.

The practice shows, however, that the interaction between Asia and Europe managed to develop a peaceful and non-blaming mode. Chronologically looking, ASEAN-EU relations experience deadlock because of the ethical rhetoric and pressure of the EU on the human rights issues. At the coinciding time, there was much of anti-Westernism going on the Asian side with the concept of Asian values. The atmosphere on both sides was tense and distrustful. ASEM has managed to bring the habit of communicating and dialoguing without a “blame game”, that taught both sides to go a step forward in accepting each other’s working culture.

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<sup>236</sup> Alan Dupont, "Is there an Asian Way?," *Survival* 38, no. 2 (1996).

The Asia-Europe Meeting ASEM is an institutional framework for Asia-Europe relations, characterized by a high degree of informality and “non-committal negotiations”<sup>237</sup>. The cooperation character has somewhat different forms between Asian and European sides. Asian interstate cooperation is characterized by non-binding, non-committal arrangements, by low-key consultations, and informal and personalized meetings<sup>238</sup>, whereas European cooperation culture is based on clear, legally binding and authoritative decisions.

This gap in political culture has posed a serious issue in the process of Europe dialogue. In multilateral settings, European output-orientation with fixed and binding rules and norms contradicted with Asian dialogue-orientation and preference for informality and non-binding agreements. The norms and values differences, “cooperation cultures” were blamed for slow and non-substantial process of ASEM.<sup>239</sup>

This sub-chapter has showcased the process of socialization of different cooperation cultures on various levels. It explained the limits of ASEM by looking into the internal contradictory forces behind the coordination. The following section looks at how differences can create a new quality – a regional identity, and how diversification is needed to nurture a sense of grouping.

#### **4.2. Regions in the making – ASEM and regional identity formation**

Identity is closely related to values and norms. The Asia-Europe Meeting brought to attention the issue of regional identity on different levels. The following section shall elaborate on the perquisites of regional identity formation for Asian partners, with particular focus on ASEAN. Identity discourse is no single to the Asian side of the ASEM, but it is also a forum for

<sup>237</sup> Katja Freistein “Beyond the Taboos? The opportunities and limitations of Asian-European track-two dialogue” in: Jurgen Ruland, Gunter Schubert, Gunter Schucher and Cornelia Storz (eds.) 2008. *Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks of Global Governance?* P.223

<sup>238</sup> Amitav Acharya. *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia. ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>239</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process," *European Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007). P. 173-191

Europe to display and consolidate their “matured” identity. As Jokela and Gaens phrased: *“ASEM provided the EU with a testing ground to support ‘European’ values and principles, including the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights.”*<sup>240</sup>

Asian regional identity building is more interesting in terms of fluidity of it and how it is responsive to the current regionalism phenomena. For these reasons, this section will focus on the Asian regional identity building in the context of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism. There is an existing paradigm of research claiming that Europeans, based on the firm structures and traditions of the EU, and historical connections within Europe, have a more developed sense of collective identity than do Asians. Therefore, given such a contrast, ASEM has been called a process of *“the Asianization of Asia”*.<sup>241</sup>

Identity could also play an important role in institutional design, affecting especially membership (who is to be included and who is to be excluded) and the norms of the institution. Identity here is not just a function of common cultural features, such as linguistic, racial, religious etc. among a group of states, but shared norms, social purposed, cognitive models, and views of out-groups forged through political and economic interactions among culturally diverse units.

*“ASEAN’s evolving a sense of collective identity also helped to shape its decision-making process such as consultations and consensus principles, which its members claim to be a unique feature of Southeast Asian societies.”*<sup>242</sup>

The absence of such collective identities may explain why Asia could not develop a macro-regional institution in the post-war period, and why its first viable regional institution was a sub-regional group, ASEAN, which provided a more meaningful venue for socialization among a group of politically more like-minded states

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<sup>240</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 160

<sup>241</sup> Rüländ, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

<sup>242</sup> Acharya and Johnston, "Comparing regional institutions: an Introduction." P. 18-19

#### 4.2.1. Regionalism through inter-regionalism

The Asia-Europe Meeting has been widely discussed in the context of regional identity building: *“Regional identity may be fostered through conflictive and asymmetrical relationships between regional organizations or if one of the regional organizations adopts the role of an external federator such as the EU does”*.<sup>243</sup> The existing debate is based on the constructivist approach, taking into consideration the impact of having an *“Other”* with which to create a *“Self”*.

Following Edward Said’s work *Orientalism*, the binary opposition makes *“East more East and West more West”*<sup>244</sup> as Julie Gilson in analysing the ASEM case concludes that *“Asia acts for the purpose of engaging with the EU, and in the process of that interaction is responded to as though its interlocutor is responding to <Asia>, thereby reinforcing a sense of communal identity among a group not previously constituted for any other purpose”*.<sup>245</sup> She saw the mutual reinforcement of collective regional identities of Asians and Europeans, referring to this logic of forming the identity of *“who one is”* by defining/ or seeing/ first *“who one is not”*. The mutual encounters of *self* and *other* become a mechanism for self -reinforcement, while at the same time in the inter-group distinction there is a notion of intra-group homogeneity.<sup>246</sup>

The European Union remains the dominant comparison model which influences the project of Asian regionalism. However, the ASEM inter-regionalism also redefines the EU’s own sense of *we-ness* in the context of a significant *“other Asia”*. Moreover, it is critical to re-establish the relationship between Asia and Europe on an equal basis, as the ASEM documents emphasize equality of partnership, where more advanced European institutionalized integration would not suppress the less matured Asian regional mechanism.

ASEM thus can serve as an impetus for consolidation of East Asian regionalism and regional identity formation, by defining the region’s *“Asianess”*. The encounters within ASEM

<sup>243</sup> Rüländ, “ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance.”

<sup>244</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995 ), 2.

<sup>245</sup> Gilson, *Asia meets Europe : inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting*. P. 24

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. P. 23-25.

provide a venue for framing a “vis-à-vis”-type of identity, which could be seen as cultural determinism, where the presence of a clear “Other” is essential.<sup>247</sup>

This logic has led some to the conclusion that “*Inter-regionalism offers additional levels of interaction where the notion of region itself is most keenly felt*”.<sup>248</sup> The Asia-Europe Meeting provides another venue for intra-regional dialogue and cooperation that encourages region-building and shapes an “Asian” identity through the coordination of policies and activities that develop gradually the sense of “region-hood”. In the search for more dimensional cooperation and interaction, issues such as defining the regional identity, mapping of the region, and questioning whether there are commonalities that can link such a diverse region as Asia come into one picture.

The regional identity of Asia has been primarily analysed through the economic integration process and strategic cooperation.<sup>249</sup> Norms and values were also taken into consideration while particularly referring to the Southeast Asian identity.<sup>250</sup> Previous section has outlined the role of norms in this dialogue. This section, on the other hand, adopts the concept of interaction as the main catalyser in the process of creating an identity. One of the five main functions of inter-regionalism is identity formation through positioning the two groupings vis-à-vis one another.

“Regions here are not assumed to be natural, but rather ‘imaged communities’, which are created and recreated in the process of global transformations.”<sup>251</sup>

On the social and cultural level, regional identity-building shapes the nature of regional cooperation. Positing “East Asia” next to “Europe” within the ASEM framework often carries with it the connotation that “Asia” is the ‘lesser developed’ region, as though the EU model

<sup>247</sup> Gilson and Yeo, "Collective Identity-Building through Trans-regionalism." P. 24-25

<sup>248</sup> Felicio, "East Asia: The Missing Link in Multiregionalism." P.19

<sup>249</sup> Michael E. Jones, "Forging an ASEAN Identity: the Challenge to Construct a Shared Destiny," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 26, no. 1 (2006); Morada, "ASEAN at 40: Prospects for Community Building in Southeast Asia."; Takashi Terada, "Constructing 'East Asian' concept and growing regional identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3," *The Pacific Review* 16, no. 2 (2003).

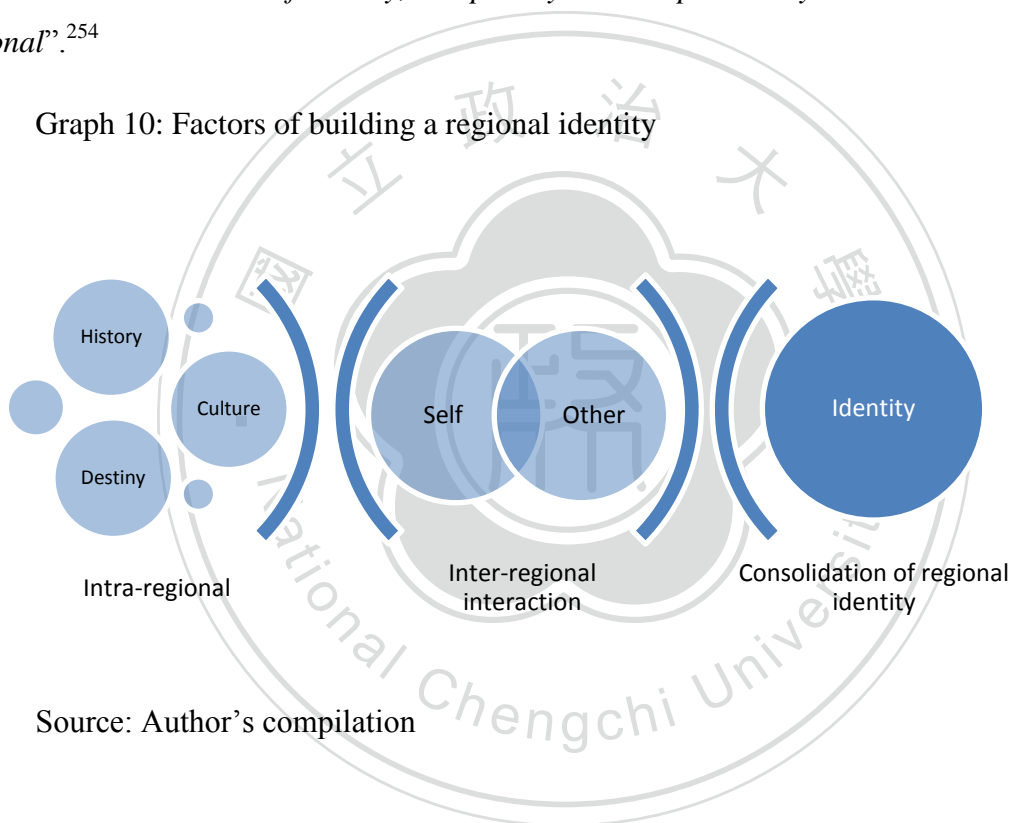
<sup>250</sup> Amitav Acharya, "Constructing Security and Identity in Southeast Asia," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* XII, no. 2 (2006); Amitav Acharya, *Whose ideas matter? agency and power in Asian regionalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Acharya, *The quest for identity : international relations of Southeast Asia*; Ba, *(Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia : region, regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*.

<sup>251</sup> Bjorn Hettne; Fredrik Soderbaum, "Theorizing the Rise of Regionness," in *Third Annual Conference of the Centre for the Study of Globalization and Regionalism (CSGR)* (Warwick University 1999).

provides the end-goal”<sup>252</sup>. Thus, “*the process of inter-regionalism within ASEM is important for the development of an Asian identity, because it establishes at the outset a dominant regional European narrative alongside a weak regional collection of Asian states*”.<sup>253</sup>

Given the diverse spectrum of ASEM’s Asian members it is difficult to expect that such a regional identity would be sustained beyond the framework of ASEM summitry. This supports the criticism that the concept of the social construct of identity is dependent on the partner actors. The “Self” in that notion is “*dialectical rather than binary, dependent rather than autonomous, embedded in a network of civility, reciprocity and responsibility and as much emotional as rational*”.<sup>254</sup>

Graph 10: Factors of building a regional identity



Source: Author’s compilation

A collective Asian identity might have been sought regardless of the ASEM process, among the Asians themselves, but as multiple and often overlapping initiatives show: no consensus has been reached. However, it is important to note that ASEM’s contribution in consolidating the Asian identity is limited to its structure framing. Asia as one region is only apparent in the conditionality of Asia-Europe Meeting membership.

<sup>252</sup> Gilson and Yeo, "Collective Identity-Building through Trans-regionalism." 26

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>254</sup> John Clammer, "Europe in Asia’s imaginary," in *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*, ed. Stephanie Lawson (London, New York: Routledge, 2003). 24



#### 4.2.2. Collectiveness and its political meaning

*“An identity may be defined by what it is not – that is, by some other identities”.*<sup>255</sup>

The concept of identity is inherently a relational phenomenon of “self” which is primarily defined in relation to “other”. Collective identity is a “reflexive self-understanding of group belonging”. Reflexivity determines the nature of identity, which can be re-evaluated; moreover it brings an element of self-awareness which means that identities require some degree of conscious reproduction.<sup>256</sup>

Identities are social products of interaction with others and represent structures that both enable and discourage particular understandings of the external world. Self-identification is relative and depends on the context of “outside” partners, thus in the case of inter-regional interaction, the actors find the “we-ness” in their dialogue with the *other*.

*“Identity formation involves the creation of <Others>, whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from <Us>”.*<sup>257</sup>

In other words, *self* cannot exist without *other*. Following this understanding, an identity is created through interaction, and is a process of self-reflection. The existence of an *other* or *others* who influence the identification of the *self* becomes the crucial condition. The interaction with an *other* or *others* might cause appraisals, or mirroring, but it mutually defines the boundary of the “self” and the “other” by differentiation.

The interactionist concept of “reflected appraisals” or “reciprocal typifications” suggests that actors form identities by learning through interaction to see themselves as others do. The more significant these others are, the faster and deeper this process works. By seeing others through cooperative acts where one expects them to be co-operators too, one changes the inter-subjective knowledge in terms of which of their identities are defined. Through interaction, actors are also trying to project and sustain a presentation of their *Self*. Thus, by engaging in

<sup>255</sup> Peter Weinreich and Wendy Saunderson, *Analysing Identity: Cross-cultural, Societal, and Clinical Contexts* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003). 33

<sup>256</sup> Rawi Abdelal et al., “Identity as a Variable,” in *Measuring Identity: A guide for social scientists*, ed. Rawi Abdelal; Yoshiko M. Herrera; Alastair I. Johnston; Rose McDermott (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 18-19

<sup>257</sup> Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. 332



cooperative behaviour, an actor will gradually change its own belief about who it is, helping to internalize that new identity for itself. By teaching others and themselves to cooperate, in other words, actors are learning to identify with each other, to see themselves as a “we” bound by certain norms.<sup>258</sup>

Identity, especially a collective one, almost always carries connotations to the affiliation to a culture. The process of interaction among different cultures and the identity formation through that process, calls for some understanding the nature of cultural relations. Cultural relations requires not only a dynamic understanding of culture, but also one that is critically aware that cultures are not just sets of habits, but they embody the underlying ontological and epistemological presuppositions. The production of cultural identity is shaped by the political organization of knowledge.

At the foundation of the Asia-Europe Meeting was the need to enhance mutual knowledge, understanding, and perception. In 1997, soon after ASEM was established, prior to the inception of ASEF, Paul Van Der Velde wrote:

*“Unlike cooperation in the economic sphere, progress cannot be measured in statistics and balance sheets. To succeed, this process must overcome misperceptions, prejudices and biases, often unbeknownst to the person who holds them. Understanding cannot be fostered only through government-to-government negotiations. Nor can it be done through business contract alone. A broader section of the civil society needs to be involved. Intellectuals, cultural leaders, youth and the media have important roles to play. The intangibility of results may make it difficult to obtain resources and financial commitments.”*<sup>259</sup>

As for the Asian part, the current membership of ASEM presents a wide spectrum of diverse Asian members. There exists a pressure within Asia to come up with “shared” cultural or civilizational characteristics. “Asian values” have been proposed again, but they somehow better reflect Confucian qualities. With dynamic processes of regionalism happening in Asia, identity has become a focal point for regional politics. Regionalism based upon cultural characteristics is

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<sup>258</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Identity and Structural Change in International Politics," in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid; Friedrich Kratochwil (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996)., 57-58

<sup>259</sup> Paul Van Der Velde, "Cultural Rapprochement between Asia and Europe: An Introduction," in *Cultural Rapprochement between Asia and Europe: Five Essays on the Asia-Europe Relationship*, ed. Goh Chko Tong; Wim Stokhof; Thommy Svensson; Francois Godement; Shintaro Ishihara (Leiden, Amsterdam: IIAS, 1997). 18

more exclusive than regionalism based on economic or even geographic criteria. Thus, the debate about East Asian regionalism based on cultural values and legacies, as opposed to non-Asian values promoted by such anti-Western thinkers as Mahathir.

Inter-regionalism, hence, serves as an impetus for Asian regional processes in terms of consolidating a regional identity. ASEM has opened a new chapter for Asian/ East Asian regional cooperation. As ASEAN and Plus Three countries play key roles in ASEM, the constructivist perspective sees East Asian governments' attempts to construct a regional identity vis-à-vis other regional communities, meaning the sense of Asian identity is refined by participation in inter-regional frameworks.

To use Michael Drake's words: *"Asia-Europe Meeting is an exemplary of how in the conditions of contemporary globalization, cultural representation is no longer mediated by political ideology but appears as a necessary focus for political organizations."*<sup>260</sup>

ASEM is contributing in helping to construct the notion of an East Asian region through a sense of "self-identification".<sup>261</sup> The role of inter-cultural exchange in Asian identity-building depends on the intensity of the ASEM dialogue. Interaction is understood as *"the stories that social actors tell and by which, in the process, they come to define themselves or to construct their identities and perceive conditions that promote and/or mitigate the possibility for future change"*.<sup>262</sup> Institutions provide a forum for consolidation of a feeling of group belonging, which is created when *"a group feels endangered by a common external threat or challenge"*.<sup>263</sup>

For ASEAN, the interaction in ASEM, underlines its special role. On the Asian side it has the most consolidated position as the only group on that side. It is recognized by the EU and by the rest, single Asian members. ASEM is also the only multilateral institution that ASEAN Secretariat is a member. Although the Secretariat is not active, this very fact gives ASEAN a legal and political representation. That adds to the political representation of ASEAN outside of its region.

<sup>260</sup> Michael S. Drake, "Representing 'old countries': the Strategic Representation of Culture as Heritage in the Asia-Europe Summit Meetings," in *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*, ed. Stephanie Lawson (London, New York: Routledge, 2003). 33

<sup>261</sup> Lawson, "ASEM and the Politics of Regional Identity." 29

<sup>262</sup> Christine B. N Chin and James H. Mittelman, "Conceptualising Resistance to Globalization," *New Political Economy* 2, no. 1 (1997). 25-27.

<sup>263</sup> Gilson, *Asia meets Europe : inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting.*, 17.

#### 4.2.3. Identity as cultural representation

This analysis of ASEM is about the role of culture and the function of cultural representation in international politics. As the name itself emphasizes, the meeting has an informal character and one driven by dialogue. It also implies that the actors involved are distinct and separate, and therefore need to meet. The meeting refers to the cultural concordance, and cultural representation becomes a precondition of the meeting. If one tracks the official documents and declarations of ASEM, “culture” and the need for “mutual understanding” are recurring themes.

At its origins, and contributing to the intentions for establishing this institution, there lays a consensus recognizing the existence of a knowledge gap between the regions. There are certain implications of that decision, though. By bringing ASEM to life, leaders committed to enhancing that mutual understanding. However, the naming reveals existing propositions about the divide between the actors involved. In the naming, the distinct terms “Asia” and “Europe” infer collective identities which precede the meeting and thus structure the differences between each of the participants in a binary order.

When defining the participants for the purpose of dialogue, there is an assumption of difference that hinders understanding, and therefore signals the need for dialogue. Culture here serves as an instrumental function in organizing the agenda, becoming a structural repository for issues concerning the identity and interests of actors. Such identities and interests require cultural representation, and that involves “*internal functions of sovereign states, thus politics, democracy, civil society, human rights become by default cultural*”.<sup>264</sup>

Cultural representation in the Asia-Europe Meeting process does not function in the old sense of ideology, to mask or legitimate the true intentions of agents. ASEM rather, is a vivid example of how the organization of cultural representation produces a structure of relations that is necessary to accomplish the tasks of elite formation and reproduction by providing a field in which political elites can cooperate: a field of action beyond the given dictates of sovereignty in an international system. It provides a space for political action and elite formation though

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<sup>264</sup> Drake, “Representing ‘old countries’: the Strategic Representation of Culture as Heritage in the Asia-Europe Summit Meetings.” 35.

cultural representation. “*Cultural identity is in fact an effect of cultural representation, so that representation actually constitutes its subject*”.<sup>265</sup> Cultural representation enables the identification, engagement, exchange and networking necessary for elite formation and reproduction. It also enables an elite political process to be presented as *necessary*, not in the sense of expressing deep essential structures or identities, but in the context of globalization, in a practical political sense.<sup>266</sup>

At the core of this concept, there lies the idea that the “self” of every culture, its personality or identity, is more or less open to and influenced by other cultures, their personalities, and identities. Individuals and groups of one culture are obliged to interact with those of other cultures. This interaction may have a cooperative or competitive character, be peaceful or belligerent, interrupted or continuous, depending upon time, environment and motivational factors.<sup>267</sup>

Cultural heritage and tradition play a vital role in forming and re-confirming cultural identity. The notion of heritage in the Asia-Europe inter-regionalism becomes a form of expression of nation, region and people. It denotes the identity representation of national, regional, or ethnic formations. It demands sensitivity and de-politicization in the wake of the Europe-Asia colonial experience. Heritage is also an **imaginary expression of collectivity**, essential for cultural representation; with political necessity and instrumental utility.

Moreover, heritage provides a sense of shared “Europe” and “Asia” referring to the notion of civilization as a condition for regional identification. Culture as heritage provides a means to overcome cultural impediments derived from the colonial legacy or relations between the two regions. ASEM overcomes the legacy of Orientalism-Occidentalism, in which each party sees the Other as a “*fantastic amalgam of its own fears and projections, into an historically provident dialectic*”.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. 33

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. 37

<sup>267</sup> Chhanda Gupta and D.P. Chattopadhyaya, "Introduction," in *Cultural Otherness and Beyond*, ed. Chhanda Gupta; D.P. Chattopadhyaya (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 1998). 7.

<sup>268</sup> Drake, "Representing 'old countries': the Strategic Representation of Culture as Heritage in the Asia-Europe Summit Meetings." 39.

The goal is to construct a deep understanding, and cultural representation establishes a strategic field where culture provides the means of association and mode of operation for novel inter-regional relations through cultural and intellectual exchanges. The awareness that representation produces cultural value led to recognition of the constitutive effect of representation itself. In the changing conditions of globalization, cultural representation and recognition in Asia-Europe Meeting discourse, culture is an expression of a nation or a people elevated to the regional level.

While heritage provides the conditions for representation, ASEM exemplifies a reconfiguring of the principle of representation itself to acknowledge that cultural representation helps construct the identities it represents. The strategy of cultural representation of an imaginary other also reconstitutes representation itself, and in the context of globalization, cultural representation becomes an instrumental necessity as the medium of exchange and identification.

The relation between “self” and “other” has several characteristics and functions:

- a) as self-understanding, self-discovery, and self-enlargement;
- b) as comparative and contrasting consciousness
- c) as comparative expression of the self in the light of Self’s understanding of Others<sup>269</sup>.

In other words, understanding the Other is a necessary means of understanding the Self. And self-understanding requires the Other because the Other provides a medium or dialogue partner through which the self can see and test its limits. **Thus encounter with the cultural other is essential to awaken and enrich one’s sense of self.** An encounter provides a stimulus for consciousness of the self by “mere contrast”. The Self does not only determine itself against the contrasting Other, but reshapes and enriches itself by assimilating or appropriating aspects of the other and consequences of the interchange. Through this process of self-definition and self-development by self-transformational absorption of the other, the self becomes what it is.

By this token, Asia is what it is, how it is seen, and how it sees itself in the encounter and interaction with Europe. The Asia-Europe Meeting provides a framework for communication and

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<sup>269</sup> Richard Shusterman, "Understanding the Self's Others," in *Cultural Otherness and Beyond*, ed. Chhanda Gupta; D.P. Chattopadhyaya (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 1998).

cooperation to the states, a channel of interaction among the peoples of the member states. Identity building in the context of inter-regionalism theory refers to a reflexive process of interaction, in which cognitive factors shape and sharpen regional identities, in a process of regionalism through inter-regionalism.<sup>270</sup>

*"ASEM is an explicitly inter-regional dialogue that posits an 'Asian' grouping alongside a 'European' one. At the official level, this intercultural exchange often resulted in a dialogue of difference, as Asian and European modes of thinking part ways on issues such as human rights and notion of good governance".*<sup>271</sup> Gilson and Lawson showed that differences over certain key issues are exemplary of the divide reinforcing the Self and Other. Within ASEM, tensions concerning disputable issues (e.g. about civil society empowerment) bring about the notion of Self and Other as Asia meets Europe, juxtaposing their value systems.

The perceived Self/Other division between European and Asian approaches to civil society may be overcome by the process of interaction over time on the margins of ASEM structures. Julie Gilson claimed that the perceptual gaps exposed by the inter-regional nature of the ASEM process have led to an oversimplification of issues such as human rights at both official and unofficial levels, and have further entrenched notions of donor-recipients and North-South differences.<sup>272</sup>

The inevitable Asia-Europe split on attitudes toward human rights issues highlights the existing **conceptual and perceptual tensions**. This advocates cultural relativism arguments, trying to "balance" the fairness of the dialogue by not allowing either side to assume the superiority of their opinions. During ASEM's Third Summit in 2000, one South Korean official was reported as remarking that, on the subject of human rights, there continued to be *"two schools of thoughts – one from Europe and one from Asia"*.<sup>273</sup>

Human rights issues are often cited as the indicator for Asians to construct their identity in context of conceptual opposition to Europe.<sup>274</sup> This attitude would fit the Mahathir-stand of

<sup>270</sup> Felicio, "East Asia: The Missing Link in Multiregionalism." 19.

<sup>271</sup> Gilson, "Forging Identities on the Margins of ASEM." 59.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 63

<sup>273</sup> Lawson, "ASEM and the Politics of Regional Identity."

<sup>274</sup> Georg Wiessala, "Catalysts and Inhibitors - The Role and Meaning of Human Rights in EU-Asia Relations," *CERC Working paper series* 1(2007).



opposing the Eurocentric, colonial attitude of superiority towards their now equal and sovereign Asian counterparts.<sup>275</sup> Such irreconcilable differences can easily push ASEM into an iron frame of “dialogue of difference”; not bringing Asia and Europe together, but rather positioning them oppositional vis-à-vis each other.

#### 4.2.4. Awakening regional awareness through interaction

There are different levels of anticipation of a collective regional identity. What has been discussed earlier is at the top level: politically orchestrated diplomatic meetings between governments. In that context, ASEM creates a forum for heads of state to interact, and each of them acts as representatives of their own country. That way, even the interaction is among people, it is more at the national level, as the individuals are not themselves per se, but have taken up also the representative roles.

ASEM at its summitry and diplomatic level has established a habit for leaders to meet on regular basis.<sup>276</sup> Summitry is defined as diplomacy engaged in by political principals. Summit diplomacy, according to David H. Dunn, has become very much an established part of international states. He argues that the decolonization process and expansion of the international community contributed to the growth of regionalism and regional diplomacy.<sup>277</sup> Two significant factors were identified in explaining summitry: the actor participating, and the activities constituting the meetings.

In the mind of its creators, ASEM was to serve only the function of a forum for dialogue. In the rhetoric it underlines the role of a confidence-building, multilateral diplomatic forum. At the core of ASEM are the consultative relationships and a network of meetings. And while Asian regional forums, such as ASEAN Plus Three, ARF, and APEC allow members to meet frequently, only ASEM allows each member to meet with leaders of the EU states.

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<sup>275</sup> David Camroux, *"Looking east"-- and inwards : internal factors in Malaysian foreign relations during the Mahathir era, 1981-1994*, Australia-Asia papers, (Qld., Australia: Griffith University, Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, 1994).

<sup>276</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, *Asia and Europe The development and different dimensions of ASEM* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003). 65.

<sup>277</sup> David H. Dunn, "What is Summitry? , " in *Diplomacy at the Highest Level: The Evolution of International Summitry*, ed. David H. Dunn (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). 22.



Yeo Lay Hwee, a long-time observer of ASEM process, outlined the values of such regular meetings:

- providing an opportunity for leaders to exchange views and ideas,
- acting as the impetus for breaking any bureaucratic impasse,
- resolving difficult issues,
- building up personal relationships among the leaders that could help in future decision-making,
- promoting communication,
- serving an educational value – forcing heads of government to focus on the other international issues beyond their own domestic, or intra-regional ones,
- face-to-face discussion, providing extra pieces of information,
- better understanding and
- appreciation of the intricacy of relationships<sup>278</sup>

As she argued, ASEM was not intended to be an issue-solving forum in the first place. Rather, the role of ASEM summits is to raise two regions' awareness of each other, spin off initiatives, prod the business sector, and act as a stimulus for networks and linkages to emerge. *“Rather, it is a forum for leaders to prod each other's minds and understand each other's positions or perspectives on the issues. Only when a comfortable level of understanding is established can one expect ASEM to proceed to the next stage of coordinating members' positions or policies.”*<sup>279</sup>

Indeed, as author's interviews confirms, many of Asian, particularly Southeast Asian politicians see in ASEM an opportunity to promote themselves, to present themselves on a public forum.

An official from ASEAN Secretariat in charge of external relations expressed his views:

*“ASEM might never replace the ASEAN-EU dialogue that is much more concrete, but it gives us opportunity to present ourselves and get acquainted to other actors. Not only European, but also other Asian partners. It serves self-promoting purposes, and also helps us understand*

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<sup>278</sup> Yeo, *Asia and Europe : the development and different dimensions of ASEM*.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 87.

*each other better.*”<sup>280</sup> The value of presenting themselves is crucial, as it underlines ASEM’s role as a social settings for actors to shape views and images of themselves and each other.

Another ASEAN official shared with the author his view on the question of consolidating an Asian regional identity:

*“Identity is not something you can invent. It needs a shared affiliation and understanding. We’re still trying to understand each other. We need to emphasis more on the commonalities that we share, as Asians, than the differences.”*<sup>281</sup>

Above, and many more quotes can confirm the official standpoint on the regional identity formation as a political outcome. However, a collective identity, by definition, refers to a larger collectiveness. Can a regional identity be merely politically driven and politically anticipated by the leaders only without their peoples sharing the feeling of “we-ness”? Identification requires confirmation by definition, and the collective character of it requires that the masses would share that feeling. ASEM, as claimed from the beginning, is supposed to enhance mutual understanding of the peoples of Asia and Europe. The ASEM as a diplomatic module cannot involve members of its governed peoples. Therefore, ASEM established other institutions that would have more direct outreach to the civil society.

The leaders recognized that need by officially proclaiming: *“Asia and Europe’s interest in each other must go beyond economics and business. It cannot be one dimensional. A long-lasting relationship needs to be built on a solid foundation of mutual understanding and trust, one based on close people-to-people contacts.”*<sup>282</sup>

To fill into this trust gap, cultural rapprochement and enhancing mutual understanding are essential. The understanding through rapprochement can be reached in three phases:

1. The first stage is a networking stage. Close the knowledge gap through more exchanges and interactions of think tanks, youth, media, and cultural leaders.

<sup>280</sup> Interview conducted by the author, May 2012 at ASEAN Secretariat. The quote was a part of an answer the interviewee gave to the question: “What does participation in ASEM process mean to ASEAN?”

<sup>281</sup> Interview conducted with an ASEAN official on the occasion of international conference on ASEAN Vision held in Taipei, April 2011. The quote was a part of an answer the interviewee gave to the question: “The recent efforts to build ASEAN Community are apparent. Do you think ASEAN Community can bring along a stronger sense of regional identity?”

<sup>282</sup> Velde, “Cultural Rapprochement between Asia and Europe: An Introduction.”

2. Stage two is called “constructive dialogue” where building greater understanding encourages the process of dialogue. In this stage, differences in perceptions, values, and attitudes can emerge, but certain issues of common interest can be identified as well.

3. Stage three is the consensus-building one. It is a time during which partners are able to develop shared values and goals in various fields. E.g. ASEAN-EU Eminent Person Group in 1996 identified some common areas of endeavour like liberalization of trade, reduction in state intervention, etc.<sup>283</sup>

Graph 11: Stages of ASEM interaction process



Source: Adopted by the author based on “*Cultural Rapprochement between Asia and Europe*”<sup>284</sup>

One needs to bear in mind that developing mutual understanding is a complex and slow process. The process of networking, constructive dialogue, and consensus building between Asia and Europe is to gradually bring the societies together, to diminish the **psychological and cultural distances**. The above stages certainly are necessary conditions for building an identity; yet not sufficient. Identity is a complex and rather intangible issue, that no formula can guarantee the outcome.

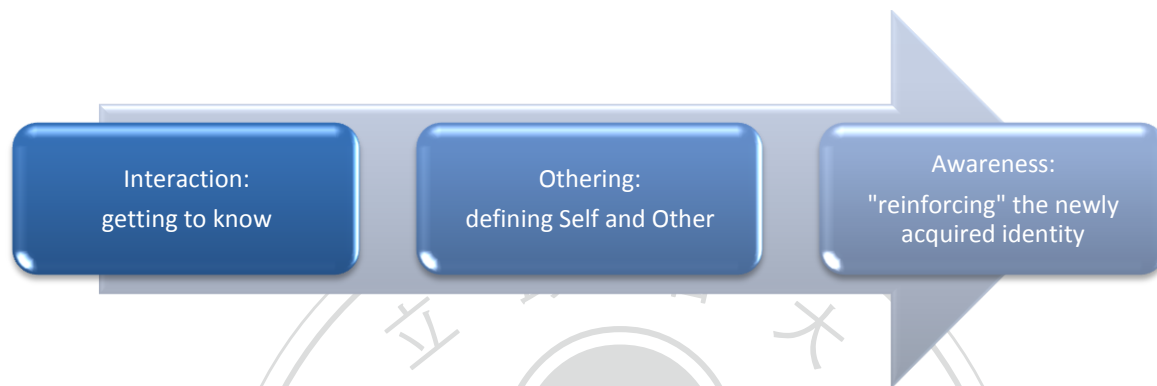
Mutual awareness of Asian and European cultures should be achieved by involving the media, academic institutions, social and cultural foundations and other public institutions in both

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>284</sup> Goh Chok Tong et al., *Cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe : five essays on the Asia-Europe relationship*, Lecture series (Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, 1997).

regions, in an integrated, coherent way. In other words, ASEM's objective of mutual learning and socializing cannot be complete without ASEF's activities.

Graph 12: Visualization of the process of identity formation



Source: Author's research

#### 4.2.5. Identity on the grassroots level

Similarly to the meeting of heads of states when it comes to representation, regional identification on the people's level are also based on the contextual representation. In her small questionnaire the author exercised upon Asia-Europe Foundation activities, she found out that only when there are a clear point of reference, in this case – Europeans, do many Asians look for affiliation to each other.

The first and perhaps most inspiring response I found out was an Indian respondent saying:

*"I only feel Asian when I leave Asia."*<sup>285</sup>

<sup>285</sup> Response to the question: "Do you identify as an Asian?" Interview conducted during ASEF activity in Paris, June 2009.

This experience has led me to look closer at the people's level of interaction and their perceptions on the regional identity. The activities of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) working on the mandate of ASEM created the opportunity to draw data from.

The Asia-Europe Foundation was established in 1997, and as a child of ASEM it reflects the political structure of membership, and is entitled to ASEM's agenda. ASEF was an initiative by Singapore to promote exchanges between Asian and European think-tanks, cultural groups, and people. ASEF was designed to act as a clearinghouse and a catalyst or facilitator of dialogue and cooperation. The third pillar's activities of ASEM inter-regional process is handled by ASEF. Its official mission statement includes the following:

*"Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focused on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations."*<sup>286</sup>

The Asia-Europe Foundation has since served as an agent of connection between the two regions at the peoples' level. It facilitates exchange among civil societies, academic institutions, NGOs, and professional organizations to ensure that ASEM work exceeds merely the governmental level. It creates people-to-people networks in view of strengthening "information multipliers", which can increase awareness and understanding between the two regions. The intellectual exchange functions as a think-tank for ASEM, inviting academia, government, private sector, and civil society to contribute to long-term strategic thinking.

By launching cultural exchange projects, ASEF promotes cultural dialogue and networking among young artists and offers a platform for dialogue at the policy-making level. As one of the ASEF program's participants described: *"Never in the history of mankind have cultural boundaries between nations and civilizations been so fluid as we are now experiencing"*.<sup>287</sup> Countries once divided by Iron and Bamboo Curtains now share many similar

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<sup>286</sup> ASEF official website: <http://www.asef.org> (accessed September 18, 2012).

<sup>287</sup> Zainal Mantaha and Charit Tingsabadh, *Asia-Europe: Towards Greater Inter-Cultural Exchanges. 6th ASEF University* (Singapore: ASEF, 2003).

cultural traits, and countries that used to be separated in the hierarchy of power by colonialism now grow through similar economic welfare, technology, and information development.

The Asia-Europe rapprochement itself serves no purpose of comparison, differentiation or deliberate “*Othering*”. It provides a venue for meeting, learning and commonness in creating. Not only do the Europeans learn from and about the Asians and vice-versa, but the Asians can learn from each other. This learning process creates an opportunity for self-definition, association and accommodation, as well as a re-evaluation of old stereotypes and even prejudices. In fact, most ASEF alumni are artists, intellectuals, and young people with open minds who emerge into a new culture of globalization, where no fixed values or cultural traits are solely specific to one region. The Asia-Europe inter-cultural exchange welcomes cultural pluralism, where difference is celebrated, but does not divide.

Another ASEF alumnus expressed:

*“I welcome the inception of ASEF because it creates intellectual links – in their broadest sense – between two continents that have contributed immeasurably to the flowering of human history”.*<sup>288</sup> Indeed, the motto for ASEF is *Embracing Diversity, Bridging People, and Shaping Partnership* which intends to blur the divide between the two continents, build unity in diversity, and join together peoples regardless of their geographic origin. On these terms, the theory of “*Othering*” and contradicting partners in order to define the “self” seems inapplicable.

#### **4.2.6. Perceptions of “Asia” and “Europe”**

However, while looking at the very idea of ASEF projects, such as “East West Dialogue” or “Asia-Europe Interface” there is a clear definition of regional divide. The Asians are put in the “Asia” team and the Europeans in the team labelled “Europe”. For Japanese, Burmese, Vietnamese, Mongolians, Indians, Indonesians etc. this is the first time that they all appear in one side. For such a diverse continent which rather associates itself in terms of sub-regions, it is a very new experience to be simply labelled as being of one region. The inter-regional framework brings them together despite political, ideological, linguistic, religious, economic, or societal

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<sup>288</sup> ASEF, *10 Years of ASEF: Voices from Asia and Europe* (Singapore: ASEF, 2007).

sub-divisions. That could only be accomplished with the presence of an extra-regional actor, which in this case is Europe, with whom Asia has had special historical connections.

Evi Fitriani, in a similar attempt to understand the attitudes of Asians towards Europeans within ASEM and ASEF interactions, came out with equivalent conclusions. In her participatory observation, she noticed a polarization tendency between the Asian participants as well as European participants of both ASEM and ASEF meetings. Based on psychological distances, conditioned by history and culture, Asians would show tendency of grouping with other Asians rather than Europeans, and vice versa.<sup>289</sup>

The cultural and psychological distances between Asian and European participants are reflected in polarizing grouping similarly among the participants of ASEF activities as well as during ASEM governmental meetings.<sup>290</sup> Fitriani claimed that colonial memory remains the main obstacle hampering from open and equal dialogue. *“The feeling of shared colonial memory among Asian participants may also lead to ‘collective intentionality’ to speak out or act together vis-à-vis their European counterparts”*.<sup>291</sup>

At the officials’ level there has been a certain degree of imbalance regarding the interests that Asia and Europe paid to each other. According to her interviews, the Asia–Europe polarization subsequently informed cognitive processes in identity development among the Asian participants in the ASEM and ASEF forums so that the “other” and the “us” were quite obvious. Fitriani noticed at one of ASEF forums:

*“Asian participants tend to “flock” into an Asian group while the Europeans also naturally gravitate towards the European group, giving rise to a sense of Asia–Europe polarization.”*<sup>292</sup>

Her conclusion was that political interests and colonial memory were the core reasons why Asians felt barriers towards their European counterparts and therefore grouped into a closer cohort in such meetings.

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<sup>289</sup> Evi Fitriani, "Asian perceptions about the EU and the Asia-Europe Meeting," *Asia Europe Journal* 9, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. P. 49

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. P. 53

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. 49



In my research process, I have encountered similar tone of respondents:

*“Do I feel Asian? I guess I am Asian... Yes. But Asians are defined Asians outside of Asia”*<sup>293</sup>

This was the answer from an Indonesian civil society representative at an ASEF activity that I interviewed on Asian regional identity. If this affiliation to an Asian collective identity is a common perception, then the Foundation contributes by bringing Asians to “leave” Asia to “meet” with Europe, allowing them to find commonalities in what differs between them when there is no clear *Other*. This chapter does not intend to search for a deepening divide between Asians and Europeans; it seeks commonalities among Asians within the contextual environment.

In participating in a number of ASEF activities, I have observed a certain pattern of behaviour of participants. There is initial curiosity leading to polite enquiries of Asians towards Europeans and vice versa, but with time, there is a tendency of interacting within “comfort group”. That means that during the first day of the activities there is a higher degree of inter-regional interaction, but second and third day tend to have higher degree of intra-regional interaction. Of course, this depends on the nature, length, and profile of participants of meetings. One of the Filipina NGO worker of Asia-Europe dialogue sat next to me on the first day of workshop and said:

*“I’m glad there are more Asians participating. I was afraid that it would be only Europeans.”*<sup>294</sup>

The Asia-Europe interaction might not be sufficient to stand as the main or a sole factor in creating an Asian identity, simply based on differentiation with European partners as the “common Others”. However, the contacts help to consolidate and entrench a sense of collective awareness of the distinctive cultural heritage that is common to the region. The first ASEF Executive Director and Singapore’s distinguished diplomat and scholar, Tommy Koh once said:

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<sup>293</sup> Interview with a cultural professional, conducted while author participated in one of ASEF activities on Promoting Cultural Diversity: Sharing Experiences from Asia and Europe; held in April 2010 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The quote is a part of answer the interviewee gave to the questions: “Do you identify yourself as an Asian? Do you share an idea of an Asian identity?”

<sup>294</sup> Participation in workshop about Sharing experiences of migration management between Asia and Europe. Vienna, June 2012.

*“ASEM forced Northeast and Southeast Asians to meet and be consolidated into “Asian” side participants of ASEM, commencing to develop the habit of meetings that include China, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia.”*<sup>295</sup>

ASEF provides an opportunity for citizens to experience this format on the individual level. These common experiences encourage Asians to perceive of themselves as one region beyond the differences and imbalances within it. Cross-regional cultural interflow reinforces the images and representations of the “Other”, producing collective “Asian” and “European” identities.<sup>296</sup> ASEF thus symbolizes the mutual acknowledgement of a homogenous regional *Other*. The knowledge and culture are emphasized, because “*culture is the medium through which individuals and collectivities organise and conceptualise their identity in time and space*”.<sup>297</sup> And culture is about shared meanings and serves to “*mark out and maintain identity within and difference between groups*”.<sup>298</sup> Cultural identity can be seen as a product of cultural representation.

Such images of “Asia” as appearing in the European *New Asia Strategy* policy create a common “Other” which contributes to constructing a European self-identity. Interacting as two blocks of cultural entities under the ASEM and ASEF aegis, the two regions re-invent the sense of “imagined communities”.<sup>299</sup> In context of such contacts, massively heterogeneous Asians find themselves under a cultural frame in reference with even more obviously dissimilar European *Others*. This realization comes from a relational comparison which provides a normative basis for nurturing a collective identity. For these reasons, inter-regional cooperation becomes an essential accelerator for further intra-regional integration, creating a coherent community in the Asian region and defining the regional identity.

It is not among ASEF’s objective to contribute to consolidation of a “vis-à-vis”-kind of identity. In fact, its goal is to find out commonalities and mutual interests for both Asia and

<sup>295</sup> Terada, "Constructing "East Asian" concept and growing regional identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3."

<sup>296</sup> Bart Gaens, "ASEM as a Tool to "Bridge the Cultural Divide", in *Europe-Asia interregional relations : a decade of ASEM*, ed. Bart Gaens (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008)., 92.

<sup>297</sup> David Held et al., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). 515

<sup>298</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publication, 1997). 3

<sup>299</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflection of origin and spread of nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2006).

Europe. However, as the ASEF staff they observe themselves: *“We do not group the participants in opposite camps default. However, it is a common practice that European participants tend to interact more easily with other European and vice-versa.”*<sup>300</sup>

And by adhering to the political mandate of equality, ASEF’s programs always have to assure a balanced representation of the two regions. That means in each activities, ASEF needs to have equal number of participants from Asia and Europe. On one hand it ensures the equality, on the other; it reinforces the diametric character of the actors involved.

While building bridges and filling-in the knowledge gap between the regions are primary objectives of ASEM and ASEF, the enhanced knowledge sometimes reinforces the existing divide. The Asia-Europe Foundation launched an exhibition under the title “SELF and OTHER: Portraits from Asia and Europe”, being a collection of paintings over the centuries presenting how Asians and Europeans perceived each other through art. That rich collection outlined the complex history of mutual perception through the medium of visual representation. It also illustrated the degree of unfamiliarity and misperception of the peoples from both continents that existed for a long time. It showcased fantasies and stereotypes that Asia and Europe had about each other.<sup>301</sup>

There were four sections of that vast collection exhibited:

- a) Asian images of Asia,
- b) Asian images of Europe,
- c) European images of Europe,
- d) European images of Asia.

By launching this project ASEF has contributed vastly to the mutual understanding of Asians and Europeans. On the other hand, despite enhancing knowledge of each other, it somehow reinforced the divide of “Self” and “Other” between the Asians and Europeans.

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<sup>300</sup> Interview conducted by the author on the field research trip visiting the headquarters of ASEF in Singapore, June 2012. The quote is a part of interviewee’s answer to the question: “ASEF creates opportunity for interaction for peoples from Asia and Europe. By such a typology of grouping, do you think it reinforce an opposite collectiveness emerging from a wider Asian group and a wider European group?”

<sup>301</sup> Kenji Yoshida; Brian Durrans, *Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe* (Osaka: The Asahi Shimbun, 2008). 10-11.

A similar dynamic marked the research project titled “Asia in the Eyes of Europe and Europe in the Eyes of Asia”, in which ASEF has been heavily involved. On the one hand, it is a neutral academic study of mutual perceptions of the regions, providing a deeper understanding through an examination of existing images, stereotypes and perceptions. “Asia in the Eyes of Europe” and the “EU Through the Eyes of Asia” are series of studies and one of the biggest research projects measuring media, public, and opinion-leader perceptions. Covering eight EU member countries—namely Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, and the United Kingdom—the “Asia in the Eyes of Europe” project has captured and analysed over 2,700 news items, interviewed over 100 top media professionals, and conducted a survey of over 6,000 respondents to develop a unique understanding of how Europeans perceive Asia.<sup>302</sup>

Despite the realization value of the exercise, both in abolishing misperceptions and confirming existing stereotypes; however, it cannot escape a binary paradigm: Asia and Europe once again are contrasted, set in opposite camps. Additionally, it is difficult to measure their input into the political process, because of its intangibility. Issues such as culture, perceptions and identity are grounded in the deeper levels of cognition, and hence not measureable in the settings that quantitative study would present.

However, at the core of this argumentation, political decisions are negotiations (inter-cultural particularly) are conditioned by the culture and perceptions. Political leaders are individuals affected by education, interaction and experiences of exposure to other actors as well. Like other individuals, their decisions are not only directed by the rational and practical drivers. They are also affected by individual values, norms in which they grew up with, and experiences of understanding other actors with whom they interact.

Mutual perceptions matter because they are a basis for understanding and a foundation upon which actors make choices and definitions. Understanding the perceptions and perspectives

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<sup>302</sup> Martin Holland, Natalia Chaban, and Peter Ryan, *Asia in the Eyes of Europe Vol. 2 New Cases New Findings*. (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2009).

of ‘the Other’ side can provide a basis for the improved communication and give guidance on policy adjustments.<sup>303</sup> Perception is how we construct facts and understand them.

Expressed by the government representative in the interview, support my argumentation that perceptions conditions political decisions:

*“Deeper understanding of the regional cooperation and integration processes in Europe and Asia will be necessary to smooth over institutional differences. Studying perception attributes to improving the communication between Asia and Europe. Perception is decisive factor in determining the expectations of the others.”*<sup>304</sup>

### 4.3. Conclusion

This study has adopted a social framework to analyse the meaning of inter-regional relations. In terms of representation, Asians need ASEM as the forum of interaction with Europe for self-discovery, self-definition, and self-expression. Europeans serve as cultural Others, to whom they can relate in awakening a self-awareness in the process of encountering. The Asia-Europe Meeting serves as a platform for actors to practice learning and socialization processes, and in this way is a knowledge platform for discovering Self and Other.

ASEM and ASEF have become essential points of reference to measure whether there exists a perception of unity in the wider Asia. Thus, the inter-regional interaction that ASEF offers is also a crucial mechanism to accelerate intra-regional contact. The intensified contacts are, on the other hand, a starting point to enhance further cooperation and exchange. It is also a base for finding commonalities, creating new ideas and verifying perceptions. The Asian regional identity at the current stage may seem to be an unfamiliar concept, but it has started to pervade Asian thinkers, and it is being nurtured by political leaders. Continued intensified interactions might have an effect in consolidating the perceptions-in-common among Asian citizens’ mind-set.

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<sup>303</sup> Sebastian Bersick and Tania Baner, "Perception and ASEM Visibility in European Media," in *The Asia Europe Meeting: Contributing to a New Global Governance Architecture. The Eight ASEM Summit in Brussels 2010*, ed. Sebastian Bersick and Paul van der Velde (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011). P. 71-72

<sup>304</sup> Interview, diplomatic official: Brussels, January 2011

It might be too strong to say that ASEM creates an identity for the members involved in it. ASEM has yet to find its own identity. Interaction within the ASEM forum might not be sufficient to create a strong regional collective identity for such diverse groups. However, ASEM's contribution is to provide such a forum, where realization of certain concepts, like identity and perceptions, are important. For that reason, ASEM offers an eye-opening experience, a learning process of interaction and engagement with the Others to understand them better, but also to know the Self better.

Cultural representation in the case of ASEM is illustrated by the interaction of groups whose “belongings” are determined by political decisions. In other words, this political organization names what is “Asian” and what is “European” and thus constructs a typology or classification that is applicable only within ASEM structures. Activities and interaction of members are politically conditioned, which shows how culture is defined by politics. As a political organization with a plethora of political, diplomatic, and economic objectives, it puts culture among the prime justifications for its existence. More precisely, it emphasizes the understanding of culture and dialogue among cultures, which in the conviction of members, sets the precondition for smooth political dialogue as well as economic cooperation. It is the only international institution that puts the value of culture and understanding first.

There is a certain consensus that there is no Asian regional identity; at least, not one that exists beyond what is framed by the Asia-Europe Meeting. So to answer the question that this paper has posed: Can ASEM reinforce a collective regional identity for Asians? This chapter concludes that there can be a collective Asian identity fostered by the ASEM equation. It is only limited to the ASEM context and is a fluid rather than fixed. It emerges only in the interaction with the pre-conditions that ASEM sets. Although it has cultural content, it is highly political, generated by political conditions and decisions. As Ambassador Koh phrased in earlier quote, it is ASEM that “force” such regional feeling by setting the environment that would allow the “Self” to emerge in the contrary to the “Other”.

This chapter has argued about the importance of the norms in the inter-regional process. They define the cooperation culture and decide about the working format, explain the effectiveness of the process, commitment of the states, and potential conflict over the priorities.

They also define the groups within the members and contribute to the **regional identity building through reflexive differentiating**.

This analysis has shown that norms are realized through the process of socialization and interaction. Through meetings and interaction, the actors realize the differences, but also through the time, communicate, exchange and learn about each other's norms. The particular case of human rights and democratic values showed the process of communication between East and West, Asia and Europe. The following chapter shall elaborate in the detailed examples on the members level and civil society level, how the communication was effective and in which spheres.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE VALUE-ADDED ASEM: THE ROLE ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

*“Culture and values are also at the heart of a dialectic process between Europe and Asia.”<sup>305</sup>*

This chapter explains the value of cultural cooperation in the inter-regionalism of the Asia-Europe Meeting process. It contributes to the literature giving an in-depth analysis of the third pillar of ASEM, missing in the existing scholarship. This chapter goes through the breadth of the cultural cooperation activities finding the de facto definition of what is understood as the “cultural cooperation”. By doing so it analyses the mandates and role of the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) acting as the executor of ASEM agenda, but also as the active agent leading the ASEM cultural cooperation.

While Chapter Three and Four addressed the macro levels of inter-regional identity building and sub-regional (ASEAN) representation, this chapter addresses the member governments’ and civil society levels.

government members' level - benefiting from public diplomacy tools that ASEM and ASEF give

civil society level - engagement of various interest groups and actors

In this section, ASEF is examined in terms of independent capacity in leading and initiating the cultural agenda. This part argues that through ASEF, the cultural pillar of ASEM, originally considered as the additional one, has proved itself as the most sustainable and effective. This argumentation supports the main claim of this dissertation, as it shows the value of culture in the political process. At the bottom of this study there lies the paradigm that “Cultural

<sup>305</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 136

brokerage”, at this level seen as interaction between elites<sup>306</sup> and elite socialization provides for a certain cultural continuity across national, and in this case, also, regional boundaries.

The difficulty with analysing socio-cultural cooperation lies in the breadth of its agenda, and the intangibility of the outcomes. Nevertheless, this research embarks on an attempt to anticipate different angles of its contribution by looking at the successes and challenges of such programs. This chapter argues that despite the intangibility of its nature, for an observer, scholar, and a representative of civil society, it is the third pillar that paradoxically is the most tangible because of its accessibility.

Unlike the elite representation in the two other pillars, cultural cooperation is the only sphere within ASEM that is open to citizens of member states to participate in this inter-regional cooperation. As this chapter shall prove, ASEF, the facilitator of those activities, is, hence, the manifestation of “ASEM’s added value”.

## **5.1. Cultural cooperation in the mandate of ASEM**

### **5.1.1. Policy-tracing of cultural agenda in ASEM documents**

At the moment of establishment, the “third pillar” was the least concrete, being named “cooperation in other areas”. Gradually it became the “socio-cultural” cooperation. This shows a certain asymmetric progress among the pillars’ agenda. The changes were apparent from the ASEM7: *“Until recently this dimension [socio-cultural] is considered as secondary one compared to areas like political dialogue and economic cooperation”*.<sup>307</sup>

A review of all ASEM Summits statements shows that the development of cultural agenda had a slow start.

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<sup>306</sup> Elites here specifically refer to the various civil groups and representation who take up the elite role of representation in the ASEF setting – the definition is further explored in the Chapter “Pluralization of actors”.

<sup>307</sup> Si Hong Kim, “ASEM 7 and developments of its socio-cultural dimension,” *EU Research of EU Institute of Korea University of Foreign Studies* 26(2010). P.4

ASEM 1 in 1996 barely mentioned the “cooperation in other areas” as necessary for bringing the people of each region to learn about each other.

ASEM 2 in 1998 the leaders agreed that ASEM initiatives should encourage the growing interests of all sectors of society in Asia-Europe relations and thus promote a human dimension on ASEM.<sup>308</sup>

ASEM 3 in 2000 addressed socio-economic issues and globalization, where the leaders stressed the importance of human resource development in alleviating economic and social disparities; and reassured of their intention to enhance the welfare of the socially weak by promoting social safety nets.<sup>309</sup> ASEM 3 also endorsed the Korea-French Trans-Eurasian Network (TEIN), which started operating in 2001. TEIN provides a direct link between Asian and European research and education networks.

ASEM 4 in 2002 reflected the general stress present after 9/11 terrorist attacks. Since then the third pillar has been regarded as a way to address the adverse consequences of globalization and as a way to fight the root causes of terrorism and international crime. “*Cultural and social issues have finally claimed their rightful place in the ASEM discussion forum*”.<sup>310</sup> Paradoxically, events that would have been dealt in security and political forum have realized the importance and need of inclusion of the cultural context. It could be said that cultural agenda has been granted its position thanks to highly security and political implications of “clash of civilization”.

Discussions taken place in the year 2001, which was also proclaimed by the UN as the “United Nations year of Dialogue among Civilizations” contributed to the higher priority given the issues of inter-civilizational dialogue in ASEM during 2002.

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<sup>308</sup> ASEM, “Second Asia-Europe Meeting Summit Chairman’s Statement,” (1998). Available online: [http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans\\_statement\\_asem\\_2.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans_statement_asem_2.pdf) (Last retrieved on Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011.)

<sup>309</sup> ASEM, “Chairman’s Statement of the Third Asia-Europe Meeting.”; *ibid.* Available online: [http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans\\_statement\\_asem\\_3.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans_statement_asem_3.pdf) (Last retrieved on Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011).

<sup>310</sup> “ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities.” P. 114

ASEM 4 also endorsed the Conference on Cultures and Civilization (COCC), which was followed by the first conference in Beijing in December 2003 with initiative of China, Denmark, France, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Such issues as enhanced efforts in educational and cultural exchanges to prevent prejudice and stereotypes were identified. The importance of UNESCO instruments for international cooperation, dialogue on cultural diversity and involvement of the youths were also acknowledged.

The 2001 Communication from the Commission: *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership* acknowledged the lack of progress in the field intercultural dialogue. The document observed that mutual awareness has not evolved greatly, with Asia and Europe still stereotyping the other as introspective and old-fashioned, or distant and exotic, respectively. ASEM aims to counter the Huntington scenario and promote ‘unity in diversity’, drawing on the dialogue and confidence-building character, specifically addressing the role of education, access to information and the involvement of civil society.<sup>311</sup>

ASEM 5, held in 2004 in Hanoi, adopted the “ASEM Declaration on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations”, which except for education and culture added agenda on creativity and exchange of ideas, as well as promotion of sustainable and responsible cultural tourism, protection and promotion of cultural resources, and strengthening the capacity of ASEF. The flagship program “Talks on the Hills” was initiated that year. The Bali Inter-Faith Dialogue Meeting was held on July 21-22, 2005, jointly funded by Great Britain and Indonesia. The Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony with International Community adopted during the<sup>312</sup> meeting translated commonly shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance into practical actions in the fields of education, culture, media, and religion and society.

ASEM 6 in 2006 in Helsinki arguably received highest degree of attention, due to coincidence with the tenth anniversary of the organization. Held under the theme of “10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges – Joint Responses. Aside of the leaders’ summit, the tenth Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) and sixth Asia-Europe People’s Forum were held as well. The central result from ASEM 6 was the agreement on enlargement of Bulgaria, Romania, India,

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid. P.130

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. P. 131

Pakistan, Mongolia and the ASEAN Secretariat. It also debated on the creation of a physical secretariat for ASEM.

ASEM 7 in 2008 was dominated by the horror of natural disaster of Nargis Cyclone in Myanmar. Hence, the theme of discussion focused heavier on the sustainable development and natural disaster mitigations. The cultural cooperation was recognized under the value of 1<sup>st</sup> Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) Forum held in Madrid in January 2008 and the consolidation of this UN Initiative. The emphasis was put on the “momentum” of the Interfaith dialogue and urged ASEM member states to facilitate intercultural dialogue on regional and inter-regional levels. ASEF was recognized for its efforts in collaborating with UNESCO in the line of the UNESCO Convention on Promotion and Protection of Diversity of Cultural Expressions. ASEF was also praised for the launching Cutlure360 – the first Asia-Europe cultural web-portal to enhance art and cultural exchange among ASEM member countries.

ASEM 8 in 2010 in Brussels had more social and environmental focus. Among issues raised were the social cohesion, human rights and human security, and various aspects of security. Cultural agenda was side-lined, with noting the Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations. Contribution of ASEF to the visibility of ASEM and its efforts in networking of activities for promoting mutual understanding between Asia and Europe was recognized.

The most current ASEM 9 in 2012 in Vientiane was dominated with discussions on global economic crisis. Among the cultural cooperation agenda, the emphasis was put on the Interfaith Dialogue and the heritage promotion and exchange of expertise in both regions. The 9<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe People Forum was held hand-in-hand with ASEM Summit, hence, the recognition of the leaders for the engagement of civil societies into inter-regional cooperation.

The third pillar-activities became significant with the creation of the ASEF and after ten years of operation, cultural and social agenda gained recognition as the pillar which has attained the most substantial results. Asia-Europe Foundation is the only permanent physical institution of the ASEM process. According to its official mission “*Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The*

*major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focused on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.*”<sup>313</sup>

### 5.1.2. The Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) was established in 1997, a year after ASEM’s inception. It came to life as a result of initiative Singaporean and French leaders, to be responsible for engaging civil societies of ASEM members’ into the inter-regional process. Its mandate was to manage the activities falling into the third pillar of ASEM cooperation, namely cultural, intellectual, and people-to-people exchanges. To the date, ASEF is the only institution of ASEM.

Asia-Europe Foundation’s official mission states: “*Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focused on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.*”<sup>314</sup> The Asia-Europe Foundation has been evaluated as the most visible and concrete manifestation of ASEM, and a reflection of the commitment by the ASEM partners to promote Asia-Europe relations.<sup>315</sup>

ASEF is funded by voluntary contributions from its partner governments and shares the financing of its projects with its civil society partners. The organization is governed by a Board of Governors, appointed by the respective ASEM partners, who are nominated for a period of 3 years; the Board meets three times in two years to set out policy direction for ASEF. The organization frames its works under three thematic groups: Cultural Exchange, Intellectual Exchange, and People-to-People Exchange, and three administrative departments: the Executive Office, Public Affairs, and Finance and Administration.

<sup>313</sup> [www.asef.org](http://www.asef.org) [Accessed September 18th 2012]

<sup>314</sup> Asia-Europe Foundation Mission available on the official website: <http://www.asef.org/index.php/about/history> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>315</sup> Yeo, *Asia and Europe The development and different dimensions of ASEM*. P. 54

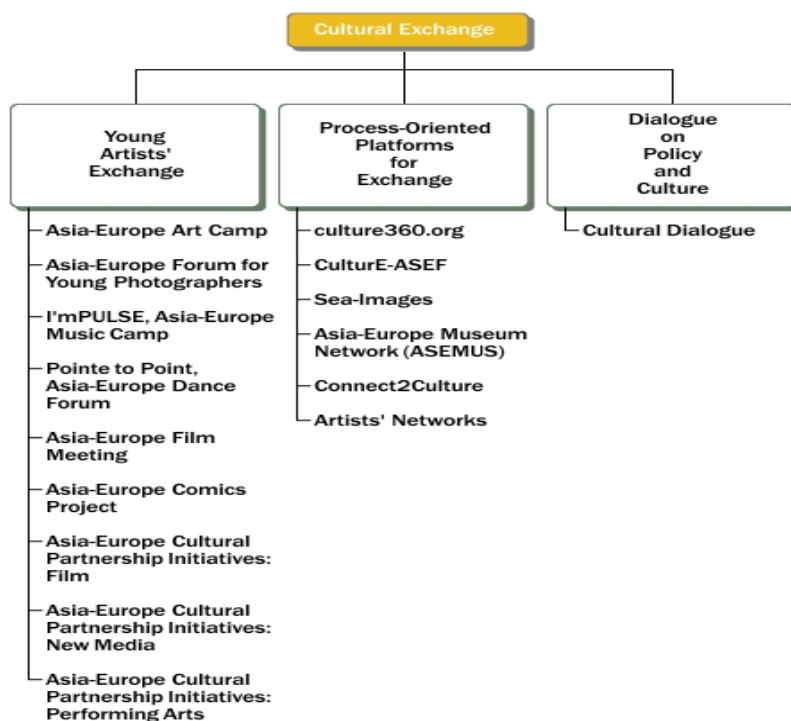
Graph 13: ASEF's organization



Source: ASEF website: <http://asef.org/index.php/about/organisation>

In terms of thematic work, the organization of ASEF extensive programs is divided into three departments which work is illustrated as below:

Graph 14: Cultural Exchange Programs:

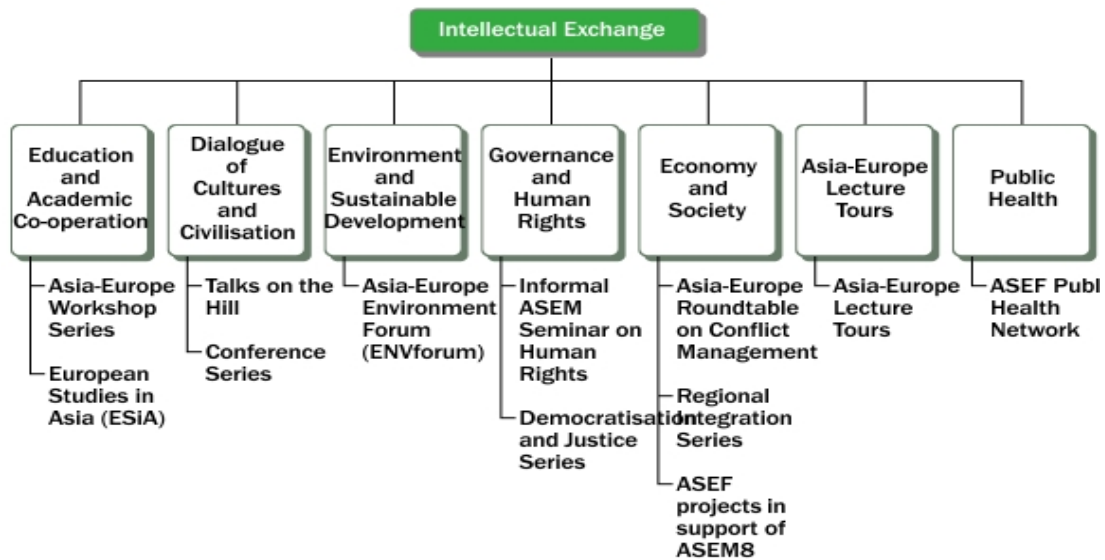


Source: ASEF website:

[http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com\\_department&task=view&id=4&Itemid=70](http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_department&task=view&id=4&Itemid=70)



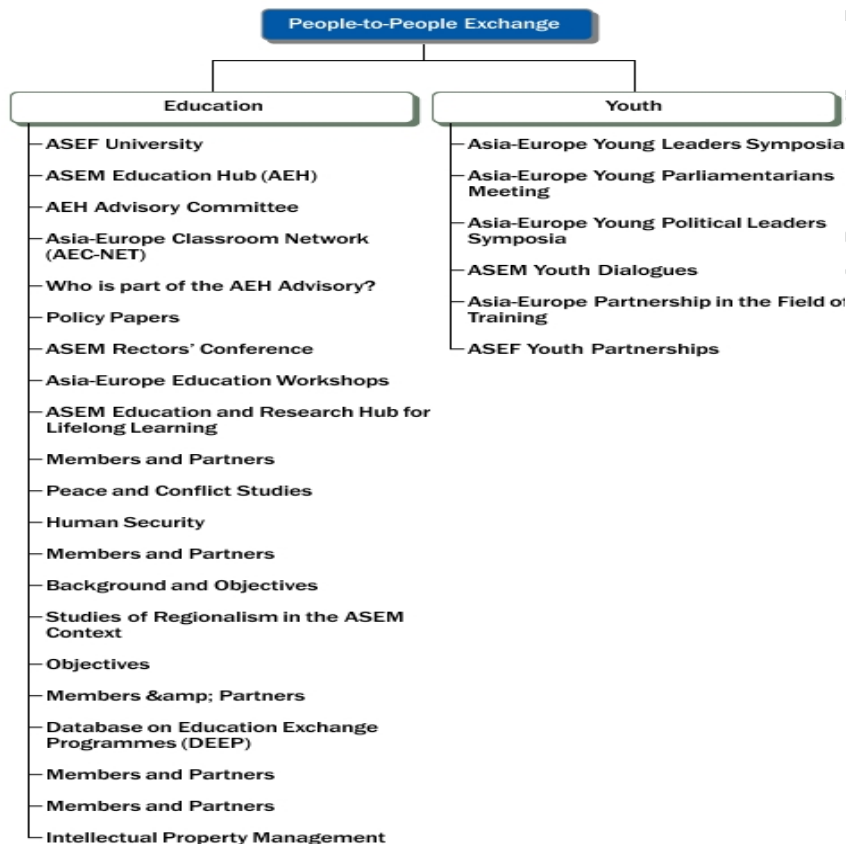
Graph 15: Intellectual Exchange Programs:



Source: ASEF website:

[http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com\\_department&task=view&id=2&Itemid=71](http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_department&task=view&id=2&Itemid=71)

Graph 16: People-to-People Programs:



Source: ASEF official website:

[http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com\\_department&task=view&id=3&Itemid=72](http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_department&task=view&id=3&Itemid=72)

### **5.1.2. Phases of ASEF evolution**

The development of ASEF interestingly reflects the evolution of ASEM itself. This part displays author's finding in interviewing staff of ASEF in examining the reality of organization juxtaposed with the official ASEM mandate. The linkages and determinants between ASEM and ASEF need to be explained starting with the organization's development.

The Asia-Europe Foundation has gone through different phases of evolution since its inception. A closer inspection of ASEF archives and interviews with long-time ASEF staff can show some apparent traits that can be grouped into the following phases:

#### **I. Phase One: "Event-organizer"**

In the first few years ASEF was event-oriented, organizing "one-off" type of events rather than sustainable long-term projects. The programs launched during this phase were more for the sake of creating meeting and encounter opportunities for the participants, rather than bringing significant outcomes. It was an important contribution, given the fact that before ASEF there was no habit of regular meetings and collaboration in such a diverse group.

#### **II. Phase Two: "Experimental entrepreneur"**

After a couple of years, ASEF's programs were streamed into four thematic areas:

- a. Education, Science and Technology
- b. Governance and Human Rights
- c. Culture and Civilization
- d. International Relations

During this period, ASEF managed to invent a safe space for candid and honest dialogue on sensitive topics, adopting the Chattam House rule, where participants, often officials, intellectuals, and policy-makers, had the "off-record" opportunity to express their views. This

phase reflects the success of creating a habit of encounters, to the degree that the interlocutors gain confidence in touching sensitive issues.

### III. Phase Three: “Lifting up to the brand”

“ASEF has become conscious of its own brand.”<sup>316</sup> After a series of experiments, it has started to aim at continuance and a higher impact of its work by limiting scope of topics and aims at “going deeper rather than broader”<sup>317</sup>. The “brand” refers to the successful and sustainable activities that ASEF had organized and which have been acknowledged as original contributions. They have also become a trademark of ASEF’s quality. These activities are:

- Human Rights Seminar - Established in 1998, the Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights is organized and managed by the ASEF Intellectual Exchange Department. These seminars bring together government officials, academics, and civil society representatives from ASEM member countries for dialogues on ASEM priorities. The rule of the meetings is to have equal representation from governments and NGOs to the table, while the European Commission and ASEAN Secretariat are also involved.
- Asia-Europe Environment Forum – Active since 2003, ASEF and the Environmental Forum have been recognised by the ASEM Environment Ministers in 2007. ASEF has initiated several programmes to provide a forum for discussion on the global challenges of sustainable development, and other environment related issues under its Sustainable Development and Environment theme. The Forum works in partnership with national agencies for the environment and development, as well as with UNEP.
- ASEF University – is a 2-week programme that aims to promote cross-cultural exchanges among youth. Organised annually at locations alternating between Asia and Europe, AU generally aims to have at least 1 representative from each ASEM country. To this date, ASEF has organized 18 AU and has met with essential interest and support, which can be seen in the active network of AU’s alumni network- ASEFUAN.

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<sup>316</sup> Interviewee 3, June 2012

<sup>317</sup> Interviewee 13, June 2012

- Culture 360 - an online platform informing the people of Asia and Europe about each other through arts and culture. It is designed to create networking opportunities for cultural professionals who are looking to share ideas by providing relevant information through weekly updates on news, events, opportunities and resources. It also features a cultural magazine with in-depth articles, interviews and profiles, and social media tools to enable online networking between individuals, as well as organizations across the ASEM regions.
- Perception Studies- this series of studies have explored perceptions, images and also stereotypes of Asians towards Europeans and Europeans towards Asians through media analysis, public opinion surveys and elite interviews. This project is pioneering in terms of the scope of Asian and European countries it has an essential contribution to the mutual understanding.<sup>318</sup>

#### IV. Phase Four: Long-lasting value-added activities

In recent years, there has been a tendency to reduce the number of programs in favor of more sustainable programs with succinct outcomes. There is more of a long-term planning approach looking for 3-4 year time ahead, and focusing on long-standing functional partnerships. In the past ASEF turned to member states for assistance in hosting events, whereas now it has started to look for partners to co-organize the events with. There is a tendency to tap into larger international events, existing networks, rather than creating something from scratch. An example of such direction is the ASEF program “Asia-Europe Environmental Forum”. By participating in

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<sup>318</sup> Details of each of these projects can be found on the ASEF website:

<http://www.asef.org/index.php/projects/programmes> [Last accessed on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013]

The Perception Studies was launch in partnership with European Studies in Asia, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, National Center for Research on Europe of Canterbury University, and Fudan University, ASEF has launched a long-term research project on Mutual Perception of Asia and Europe. As a result of it two publications were completed “The EU through the eyes of Asia” and “Asia in the Eyes of Europe”.

<http://asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/education/1148-asia-in-the-eyes-of-europe> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]. Above information was confirmed with the Interviewee 3, June 2012.

the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012 ASEF transcended the Asia-Europe context and engaged itself in the ongoing discussion at to the global stage.<sup>319</sup>

At this stage, the organization sets its goals not on hosting multiple diverse events, but rather it is looking to tap on existing fora and contributes its inter-regional, Asia-Europe resources. Unlike in the past, when it used to tackle “new” issues, ASEF now is focused on exchanging information and practices among the member states over the existing debates. The goal of the events and activities it organizes is to produce “Best Practices” publications that documents best practices of certain issue areas in each of the member countries serving recommendation purposes. The remaining challenge, however, is to identify common areas of cooperation that Asian and European members can equally commit to.<sup>320</sup>

### 5.1.3. ASEF’s ambiguous identity

Although in existence for 15 years, the Asia-Europe Foundation still faces the problem of an adequate definition. This identity problem translates to a low level of visibility externally (Lai, Chaban 2009). However, as the empirical research of the organization reveals, internally, identity is even more problematic as different levels of staff and management see the organization differently. A series of interviews consecutively over three years have been conducted with ASEF appointed and seconded staff. The author has asked the people involved in the process to self-define the organization and found out the following responses:

Table 13: Compilation of ASEF staff’s answers to the question to define ASEF:

What ASEF is?	What ASEF is not?
A child of ASEM	The Secretariat for ASEM [despite it have the function of the virtual secretariat]
The only existing institution of ASEM	An UN-recognized international organization

<sup>319</sup> Details of the program: <http://asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/environment/2647-asia-europe-environment-forum-in-rio-plus-20> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>320</sup> Interviewee 4, June 2012

The physical representation of ASEM	Grant-giver kind of foundation
The implementation of the third pillar of ASEM	
An inter-governmental institution	
A non-profit company	
“A foundation [that] people channel money through” <sup>321</sup>	
With “special treatment” of embassy in Singapore [with diplomatic rights]	
A bridge between Asia and Europe	
A bridge-builder	
A facilitator for dialogue	
A platform for governments and civil society to communicate	
De facto an international organization (but not de jure)	
A vehicle to disseminate values through	
A political organization, with “apolitical stand”	
A successful child of a political process	
An intergovernmental organization that happens to be non-profit	
A beautiful learning process	
A platform for mutual interest issues	
A confusing image	
A house of interaction	
A successful child of a political process. Successful in terms of bringing people together.	

<sup>321</sup> Interviewee 12, June 2012. This opinion is singled-out because it is contrary to the other staff’s responses. It is particularly interesting that it came out from an official part of ASEM.

“A-political”, it aligns to the political process, taking up political issues. But is not supposed to have a political stand. It is inter-governmental among 48 states. It is supposed to facilitate people to have their opinions.

Source: Author’s compilation based on interviews<sup>322</sup>

As seen from this list, there are some contradictory understandings about ASEF among the staff. This confusion in identifying what ASEF actually is and what it is not; as shall be elaborated upon later, is reflected in the organization’s effectiveness and vision of development.

## 5.2. The nebulous relationship between ASEM and ASEF

ASEF is seen, by many of those involved in the process, as an actor on its own. Although created by the ASEM governments, and supported by ASEM funding, it has a life on its own and is capable of creating outcomes, and contributions, particularly in terms of intellectual input. Cautious of cultural, social, economic and political varieties among the members, ASEF is a good exemplar of multicultural cooperation that carefully balances the diverse backgrounds with equal representation of its members.

The habit of mutual learning by building a safe space of open has been created. ASEF created an atmosphere of honest and candid discussion without any “blame game”<sup>323</sup>; and hence, it has contributed to mutual understanding on sensitive issues that would not be expressed if not for such a safe environment. One of the latest ASEF contributions to bettering Asia-Europe relations is the collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) to publish “ASEM Outlook Report 2012”. It is a two-

<sup>322</sup> The definitions are quotes collected from all interviewees, June 2012

<sup>323</sup> Interviewee 3, April 2010. The “blame game” refers to the European tendency of criticizing some Asian countries’ human rights records.



volume report, which maps out the megatrends in current issues affecting both Asia and Europe and draws on ASEF scenario building for policy recommendation.<sup>324</sup>

In that light, the Asia-Europe Foundation has been successfully playing the following roles:

- (1) Expert in Asia-Europe relations;
- (2) Contributor to Asia and Europe mutual understanding, by such projects as perception studies;
- (3) Scenario builder for certain issues commonly affecting Asia and Europe: economic integration, public health, environment, conflict management;
- (4) Policy advisor;
- (5) Expert in comparative regionalism in Asia and Europe;
- (6) Publisher and information disseminator;
- (7) Dialogue facilitator on different levels.

### **5.2.1. ASEF's contributions to the ASEM process**

#### **5.2.1.1. Pluralisation of actors**

Among ASEF's contributions and achievements, one of the most relevant is the inclusiveness of variety of actors in the process. By engaging civil society into the dialogue with governmental representations, ASEF has added to the pluralisation of the Asia-Europe inter-regionalism. This inclusiveness has been praised by a number of scholars who acknowledge its contribution to the democratisation and pluralisation of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism.<sup>325</sup>

<sup>324</sup> Further details: <http://www.asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/human-rights/2766-asef-outlook-2012#2823-asef-outlook-report-published> [Last accessed December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>325</sup> Bersick, "The democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: the role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments", in: Bart Gaens and ebrary Inc., Europe-Asia interregional relations a decade of ASEM, (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), [http://encompass.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/checkIP.cgi?access=gateway\\_standard%26url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/cornell/Doc?id=10228275](http://encompass.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/checkIP.cgi?access=gateway_standard%26url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/cornell/Doc?id=10228275); Keva, "ASEM and Civil Society."

Based on the archives, reports and publications of ASEF, the author grouped the profiles of over 17,000 participants and over 500 partner institutions<sup>326</sup> that have been involved in ASEF activities. The following table summarizes the interest groups taking part in a wide range of ASEF's programs and projects:

Table 14: Profile of participants in ASEF activities

Participants /Interest groups	ASEF Programs	Department
Artists, art practitioners, Art professionals, art organizations	Artists' Network, ASEF Cultural Grants, Asia-Europe Art Camp Asia-Europe Film Meeting, Asia-Europe Cultural Partnership Initiatives: Film, Asia-Europe Forum For Young Photographers, Asia-Europe Comics Project, Cinema, Creative Encounters: Cultural Partnerships between Asia and Europe, CulturE-ASEF, Pointe To Point, Asia-Europe Dance Forum, I'mPULSE, Asia-Europe Music Camp, Visual Arts, Asia-Europe Compendium of Cultural Policies, SEA-Images (Synergy Europe-Asia In The Field Of Cinema), Connect2Culture	Cultural Exchange
Cultural practitioners, cultural organizations, cultural leaders	Cultural Dialogue, Cultural Heritage, Culture 360, Asia-Europe Compendium of Cultural Policies, Connect2Culture	Cultural Exchange
Media professionals, media organizations, journalists	ASEF Journalists' Colloquium, Asia-Europe Cultural Partnership Initiatives: New Media, Asia-Europe Editors' Roundtable, EU-Japan-Asia Journalists' Conference, TV/Media programme, Europe Asia Forum, EMU Roadshow, Asia-Europe TV Documentary Programme, Asia-Europe Journalists' Seminar, ASEF Lecture, Asia-Europe Press	Intellectual Exchange, People-to-People Exchange

<sup>326</sup> Data provided by ASEF statistics: <http://www.asef.org/index.php/about/what-we-do> and <http://asef.org/index.php/about/partners> [Last accessed on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013]

	Forum,	
<b>Young professionals, young leaders, young politicians, Young parliamentarians</b>	Asia-Europe Young Political Leaders Symposia, ASEM Youth Dialogues, Asia-Europe Youth Cooperation, Asia-Europe Scientists of Tomorrow Programme, Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposia, Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians Meeting	People-to-People Exchange; Intellectual Exchange
<b>Youth, Youth organizations</b>	ASEF Lecture Tours, ASEF Youth Partnerships, Asia-Europe Partnership In The Field Of Training, Asia-Europe Youth Cooperation, Asia-Europe Youth Camp, Asia-Europe Young Volunteers Exchange,	People-to-People Exchange
<b>Students: high school, college, graduate</b>	ASEF Lecture Tours, ASEF University, ASEM Education Hub, Database on Education Exchange Programmes	People-to-People Exchange
<b>Academia, scholars, researchers, think tanks</b>	Asia-Europe Compendium of Cultural Policies, EMU Roadshow, Talks on the Hill, ASEF Lecture, Asia-Europe Environment Forum, ASEM Education And Research Hub For Lifelong Learning, ASEM Education Hub, Regional Integration Series, Asia-Europe Roundtable on Conflict Management, Informal ASEM Seminar On Human Rights, Democratisation And Justice Series, Conference Series,	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Rectors</b>	ASEM Rectors' Conference	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Education institutions</b>	Asia-Europe Education Workshops, ASEM Education And Research Hub For Lifelong, Learning, ASEF Youth Partnerships, Conference Series	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Publishers</b>	Publishing Programme	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Scientist (Environment, health)</b>	Asia-Europe Environment Forum, Asia-Europe Forestry Experts Exchange Programme	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Activist</b>	Informal ASEM Seminar On Human Rights	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Interfaith leaders</b>	Interfaith dialogue, Talks on the Hill	Intellectual

		Exchange
<b>International Organizations</b>	Regional Integration Series, Conference Series	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Business and financial communities</b>	Europe Asia Forum, EMU Roadshow, Democratization And Justice Series	Intellectual Exchange
<b>Ambassadors</b>	All programs	All departments
<b>Policy makers</b>	Asia-Europe Compendium of Cultural Policies, Europe Asia Forum, EMU Roadshow, Talks on the Hill, Asia-Europe Environment Forum, Regional Integration Series, Asia-Europe Forestry Experts Exchange Programme, Asia-Europe Roundtable on Conflict Management, Democratisation And Justice Series, Corporate and Official Events	All departments
<b>Ministers</b>	Democratisation And Justice Series	All departments
<b>Civil society</b>	Asia-Europe Roundtable on Conflict Management, Informal ASEM Seminar On Human Rights	All departments
<b>Foundations</b>	All programs	All departments
<b>Community organizations</b>	Talks on the Hill, Interfaith dialogue, Asia-Europe Environment Forum, Asia-Europe Forestry Experts Exchange Programme,	Intellectual Exchange

Source: Author's compilation based on ASEF materials and archives

As the nature of ASEF activities evolves, some of them result in further policy-recommendation to the higher level of Summits and meetings of the leaders. Hence, many of those actors participate indirectly in formulating policies, presenting best practices and contributing to the general dialogue between civil societies and the governments' representatives of the ASEM members.

#### 5.2.1.2. Civil society participation

The Asia-Europe Foundation has played an important role in engagement of civil society, and as Bersick describes, it has successfully established “*a pre-political civil society within the*

*Asia-Europe dialogue*”<sup>327</sup>. Being a part of ASEM governmental process, ASEF is not free from the restraints within ASEM, it also have been criticized as elitist. Yet, ASEF, designed to involve peoples’ participation of member states in the inter-regional process, can initiate non-state actors from such fields like academia, art, religion and NGOs.

Nevertheless, ASEF eventually managed to organize cooperation programs involving non-states actors from both continents in a wide spectrum of fields. The idea of “civil society” earned tolerance from Beijing and Hanoi governments after negotiations, and ASEF managed to organize the conference “Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe” in Barcelona in 2004. This case serves well as an illustration of ASEF’s contribution and shows a slow buy-in to some democratic concepts through cultural and educational cooperation. From that perspective, ASEF has a potential role as a facilitator for the democratization of the Asia-European dialogue.

Working from a mandate of a top-down ASEM process, ASEF cannot avoid the political conditionality of its activities. Created to facilitate cooperation between the civil societies of Europe and Asia, it struggled with the obstruction from the non-democratic member governments regarding some sensitive issues.<sup>328</sup> For example, bringing up the very issue of “civil society” was problematic from the beginning of Asia-Europe inter-regionalism. The presence of civil society in the meetings ignited some disagreement from the PRC and Vietnam in the early years of ASEM process.

The issue of civil society and their participation in Asia-Europe framework has remained problematic, as there are many definitions of civil society existing within the member states of ASEM dialogue. Not until 2004 when the first and the biggest to date ASEF program on “Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe” came to life in Barcelona. The meeting was intended to encourage the formulation of civil societies’ suggestions and recommendation for increasing public access to the policy level. The objectives were to integrate civil society as actor in ASEF programs and facilitate its greater participation, closer integration and better representation in the ASEM process. As an outcome, the Barcelona Report formulated three key messages:

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid. P.248

<sup>328</sup> Bersick, ““The democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: the role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments”,.”

1. The creation of a social pillar within the ASEM process is necessary
2. ASEM needs to improve its transparency. Civil society can act as an independent monitor to enhance ASEM's accountability
3. The Burma/Myanmar issue should be resolved by a common policy approach

The Barcelona meeting has showcased the ASEM commitment towards inclusiveness, equal representation, and willingness to develop itself towards participatory democracy within the ASEM. It was also a breakthrough for the Asia-Europe cooperation in terms of expanding the framework to non-state actors with emphasis put on civil society.

It can also serve as an example of socialization process between governmental and non-governmental actors within the dialogue. A proof of it might be the Vietnamese government, from the beginning, like China, also opposing to the incorporating the civil society actors, has open up, or at least no longer obstruct the very presence of civil society. Beijing and Hanoi have come into terms to tolerate informal participation of civil societies in official ASEM meetings. In fact, Hanoi was a host of Asia-Europe People's Forum in 2005 can indicate the policy change.<sup>329</sup>

ASEF has now been "appointed" responsible to lead the trend of democratization of inter-regional dialogue. As it has neither mandate nor authority to act as representative of the civil society, until now, most of the meetings have informal character. However, with multicity and intensity of ASEF programs, it facilitates the opening of political decision networking on the inter-regional level to civil society actors. As civil society has progressively involved the ASEM process, participatory democracy has also entered the Asia-Europe dialogue.

Such inclusiveness is significant in terms of the politics "from below" for current efforts to institutionalize inter-regional cooperation through ASEM. The proliferation of non-state actors and emergence of new capacities for associational life and of a political discourse articulated through notions of "public participation", political reform and accountability are evidence of rising expectations of a genuine democratic challenge to the powers of the state.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid. P.255-257

<sup>330</sup> Gareth Api Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition," *Journal of Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no. 1 (1999). P. 147

Civil society is regarded as ‘capable of representing the interests of citizens on the political arena, limiting the power of social oligarchies and making democratic institutions serve the broader sections of the population’.<sup>331</sup>

Most importantly, they differ from two other pillars by inclusiveness in terms of actors, as they address and involve non-state actors into the process. That inclusiveness has also built-up ASEM’s credibility, giving living evidence that the process is not held in vacuum of political elites, but does connect to the peoples from the member states. As the following section elaborates, the issue of diversification of actors and participants into processes has been crucial for institutions’ development.

From such a point of analysis, ASEM through the work of ASEF, fulfils what’s called “complex multilateralism” that is building a system of global governance from bottom up. The value of ASEM and ASEF can be enhanced if one looks at establishment of global civil society and its values for the globalization of democracy.<sup>332</sup> The international organizations are the manifestation of internationalism, and transnational and global democratisation is an extension and universalization of democracy.<sup>333</sup>

#### **5.2.1.3. The value of cultural cooperation**

As an example of impact that the cultural cooperation has is the profile of the participants and the policy-recommendation function.

The spill-over of outcomes of civil societies-level to the leaders’ levels’ of meeting was a slow and gradual process. At the beginning of ASEM and ASEF process, there was a vague idea of including civil societies into the inter-regional dialogue. Such inclusion, however, were not extensively elaborated, given the restraints from certain member countries. Participation of peoples from the ASEM member countries was to be handled by and within ASEF. Following the intensification of ASEF activities, and as argued earlier in this chapter, the increase in the

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<sup>331</sup> Following Luckham and While 1996.Ibid. P. 147

<sup>332</sup> Yoshikazu Sakamoto, "Civil society and democratic world order," *Innovation and transformation in international studies* 207(1997). P. 150

<sup>333</sup> Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition." P. 149



role of ASEF and socialization of civil society concepts by the member countries, the civil societies' input grew in importance.

As shown from the development of ASEF, the organization has also restructured its activities and is oriented to policy-recommendation output of its meetings. Hence, the gradually growing presence of the civil society in the ASEM process has become the default by now, output of cultural cooperation pillar. As an example of that, the following evaluation of one of ASEF flagship programs shown below illustrate the profile of actors involved and their contribution to the process.

Table 15: Evaluation of ASEF's flagship Programme "Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations"

<b>Culture and Civilizations Programme</b>			
	1 <sup>st</sup> stream: Conference Series	2 <sup>nd</sup> Stream: Lecture Tours	3 <sup>rd</sup> Stream: ASEF "Talk on the Hill"
<b>Concept</b>	Individuals actively engage in the subject matter, professionally or academically, could confer, in an open public meeting, on issues with direct impact on their work	Prominent scholars , NGO leaders, or journalists may be invited to conduct lectures – Asians tour Europe and Europeans tour Asia	Discussants could freely discuss "hot" topics in a small group, closed door meeting
<b>Partnership Strategy</b>	Always with other institutions with specific expertise	Usually with host partners	In-house, occasionally with partners
<b>Participants</b>	Government and Civil Society	Civil Society	High level policy-makers and Civil society leaders
<b>Size of Gathering</b>	Medium to large	Medium to large	Small (around 12 people)
<b>Sensitivity of Topics</b>	Low	Medium	Medium to high
<b>Modality</b>	2-3 day event	12-15 day tour	2 days
<b>Frequency</b>	3 to date	1 tour per year with 4 lectures per tour	2-3 times a year

Source: Quoted from: Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations: Programme Evaluation.

The internal evaluation of ASEF showed that the participants recognized the value of the meetings and that the effect of them could translate to changes afterwards: *“More than 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their participation in the programme influenced the way they think, as well as their work”*.<sup>334</sup>

Table 16: Profile of participants of Dialogues of Cultures & Civilizations programs

Profession	Percent
Research	69%
Teaching/ lecturing	51%
Consultancy	28%
Advocacy	24%
Policy-making	23%

Source: Quoted from: Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations: Programme Evaluation. Executive Summary

As a result of sustainable dialogues and exchanges, specifically the flagship programs of ASEF Intellectual Exchange “Dialogue of Civilizations” and “Talk on the Hills” that engages academics, policy-makers, and intellectuals to address sensitive issues being regarded as “obstacles” in the Asia-Europe relations, there emerges a global network of epistemic community. By definition an epistemic community comprises of renowned experts and scholars who engage in sustainable bi-regional process.

In the context of Asia-Europe politics, it reached a degree of continuity and momentum that is in capacity to bridge knowledge gaps between them in order to use the exchange of views and ideas productively to gradually influence policy-making<sup>335</sup>. Their role in framing, reforming

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. P. 4

<sup>335</sup> Peter Haas, “Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination”, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination (Winter, 1992), pp. 1-35

and adding value to the ASEM process is further developed in the section of functions of socio-cultural cooperation.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, issues related to cultural cooperation have their intangible benefits. However, in the attempt of measuring the effectiveness of the Socio-cultural pillar, I can prove its tangibility as well. ASEF with its concrete projects, contributions, and people's participation is an exemplification of tangibility of ASEM's existence; despite the expectations and predictions.

#### **5.2.1.2. Inter-regionalism through intellectual and education exchange**

*"Education is another area of cooperation that has advanced significantly in recent years."*<sup>336</sup> - One of the biggest inputs of the inter-regional process is creating and facilitating a channel for intellectual communications.

*"ASEF-initiated programs on education and academic cooperation, the ASEM-DUO umbrella program, the TEIN project, and most recently the ASEM Database on Education Exchange Programs (DEEP), a comprehensive portal on universities, student exchange and scholarships in Asia and Europe launched by ASEF in April 2007, are all visible signs of the increasingly important position education takes within ASEM."*<sup>337</sup>

Discourses surrounding socio-cultural and educational EU-Asia exchange connect with wider debates on the 'role of civilisations', the 'contributions' of East and West, respectively to global invention and knowledge and the 'triangular' context of Asia-Europe relations, in which EU-Asia dialogue forms the neglected link.

The most apposite conceptual framework for analysing intellectual Asia-Europe exchange is, arguably, represented by the discourse about 'culture' and 'context' in International Relations.<sup>338</sup> Some observers have highlighted culture as the 'logical link' between various EU

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<sup>336</sup> Geans, "ASEM as a Tool to Bridge the Cultural Divide." P. 90

<sup>337</sup> Ibid. P. 92

<sup>338</sup> Michael Reiterer, "The role of education and culture in contemporary international relations. A challenge for the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)," *Asia Europe Journal* 2, no. 3 (2004).

foreign policy strategies, on Asia and in general. The socio-cultural co-operation can be seen as a safeguard against the ‘inevitable’ temptations of societies to ‘absolutize’ themselves.<sup>339</sup> Culture in political and international context is seen often as a ‘**vehicle of tolerance**’, an ‘agenda for co-operation’ and an ‘instrument of mediation’.<sup>340</sup>

This is accompanied by investigations of trans-regional dialogues the role of education as a ‘toolkit’ towards building regional identity and of concerns about Asian Universities and ‘Western’ information.

ASEM has created the sustaining program of Asia-Europe Education Hub (AEH), that have engaged a significant number of scholars, researchers, university students, and research centres, universities across Asia and Europe.

The education projects have been one of the strongest facets of Asia-Europe inter-regional cooperation, not only within the third pillar, but also in overall ASEM process. The reason for that are the EU’s strong commitments to the education programs. One can see the prevalence of attention to the education programs in EC papers:

- *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* (COM (2003) 58)
- *Education, Training and Research: Trans-National Mobility* (COM (96) 462)
- *Inter-Cultural Dialogue and Understanding* (COM (2002) 401)
- *Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society* (COM (95) 590)

Most of these blueprints emphasize the ‘societal’ and ‘mobility’ assumptions of Asia-EU co-operation (CAEC 1997); they also highlight normative concerns and human rights. The EU Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Burma (Myanmar) for 2007-2010 is a good example, because it contains the following summary, which it shares, almost *verbatim*, with many similar papers.

<sup>339</sup> Stephanie Lawson, *Culture and Context in World Politics* (London: Palgrave / Mcmillan, 2006). P. 13

<sup>340</sup> W. A. L. Stokhof, Paul van der Velde, and International Institute for Asian Studies., *ASEM, the Asia-Europe Meeting : a window of opportunity*, Studies from the International Institute for Asian Studies (London ; New York: Kegan Paul International in association with International Institute for Asian Studies, 1999). P. 38; Yeo and Latif, *Asia and Europe: Essays and Speeches by Tommy Koh*.

The reason for EU's commitment to the education exchanges are not only intellectual benefits. It serves well the promotion of EU studies, understanding of EU structures and the very public relations of the EU. Thus, 'visibility' of the EU's activities is a recurring strand. This is sometimes disguised as 'developing human resources', for instance in the *Erasmus-Mundus China Window* and in similar initiatives. Other EU blueprints such as *A New Partnership with South East Asia* (COM (2003) 99) add new, 'cross-cutting', objectives like poverty-reduction, gender-equality, primary education, citizenship-training and the human right to education.

Interestingly, education cooperation is not free from cultural context. Most EU-Asia initiatives in this field can be said to have in common two key aspects: firstly, a high degree of fragmentation accompanying a measure of 'cultural diffusion'; and, secondly, a lack of maturity and significant critical engagement with the discipline itself and its impact on Asian partners.<sup>341</sup>

The more practical EU notions of what HE should be, also resonate strongly with the general flavor of EU-Asia dialogue, as evidenced by such key desirables as trans-national mobility, quality-assurance, recognition of qualifications, life-long-learning, 'distance-learning', 'vocational relevance', 'language-proficiency' and 'inter-cultural dialogue'.<sup>342</sup>

One of the most significant achievements of the socio-cultural and learning-related dimensions of EU-Asia relations:

- ASEAN-EU University Network (AUN)
- ASEM Education Hub and ASEM Duo
- ASEMUNDUS Project (2009-2012: ASEM Education Secretariat/ DAAD)
- Asia-Europe Classroom (AEC) initiative
- Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in Singapore
- Asia-Link Scheme and its HE Fairs in Asia The EU-Asia Higher Education Platform (EAHEP) and its Higher Education Fairs
- Contemporary Europe Research Centre (CERC), University of Melbourne (until 2009)

<sup>341</sup> European College for Cultural Co-operation, "Educative, Linguistic and Cultural Policies of Co-operation with the ASEAN – A Study of the European Union Member States' National Policies;," ed. Study Report to the European Communities (Brussels: EC, 1996). P. 108

<sup>342</sup> ASEF, *Asia-Europe Colloquy on Universities of Tomorrow* (Singapore: ASEF, 2005).

- EU-China Academic Network (ECAN); EU-China HE Programme (1997-2001) and EU-China European Studies Centres Programme (ESCP, from 2003); the new EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue on Education, Culture, Youth and Research (2011)
- European Network for Contemporary Academic Research on India (ENCARI)
- European Studies Programme in Vietnam (ESPV, from 2002)
- European Union Studies Programme at Universiti Malaya (UMESP)
- European Union Studies Programme in the Philippines
- MA Programme in European Studies at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
- National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE), New Zealand

Above mentioned engagements have granted ASEF recognition by academics and critics as “high-profile think-tank”<sup>343</sup>

#### **5.2.1.3. ASEF as an expert on Asia-Europe relations**

Having organized over 700 activities over the past 16 years in a vast variety of fields,<sup>344</sup> ASEF may not claim expertise in any of those fields. However, what it aspires to is to be an expert of Asia-Europe relations. Managing such a number of encounters among different interest groups from Asia and Europe and operating on the daily basis between Asia and Europe, ASEF undoubtedly has gained ad hoc experience in inter-regional communication.

Among the unique achievements that ASEF has initiated, the following gained recognition:

- Asia-Europe Classroom Network (AECN) – the only existing forum between Asia and Europe that engages educators with students together, whereas the existing platforms either connect educators only or students exchange only. AECN brings not only educators and students from the member 46 countries together; they create opportunities for educators and students to talk to each other too.

<sup>343</sup> Georg Wiessala, *Enhancing Asia-Europe co-operation through educational exchange*, Routledge contemporary Asia series (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>344</sup> List of themes and topics of ASEF’s work is available on the official website: <http://asef.org/index.php/projects> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

- Asia-Europe Journal – one of the most robust examples of intellectual input from ASEF is the inception of an academic journal in 2003. The Asia-Europe Journal publishes interdisciplinary and intercultural studies and research on Asia and Europe in the social sciences and humanities, and in fact is the first one to be fully dedicated to matters directly involving Asia and Europe from both academic and policy-makers' perspectives. Although ASEF is no longer managing the journal, as in 2011 it was transferred to Springer, it still gets credits for establishing it.
- Dialogue of Cultures and Civilization - has been recognized both by practitioners and academic analysts.<sup>345</sup> The DCC is an important contribution not only to the Asia-Europe inter-regional relations, but also to the global sensitivity of cultural diversity. In 2003 ASEF launched first Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations Programme in response to the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Declaration promoting “unity in diversity”. The overall evaluation of the ASEM process in the tenth anniversary of its existence stated: “*The Dialogue on Cultures and Civilizations not only shows importance in the consensus-building process ahead of the UNESCO declaration on cultural diversity, but is also a key cross-dimensional topic instrumental in the development of measures to address global security threats*”.<sup>346</sup> An internal ASEF evaluation on the program was conducted between September 2008 and January 2009, which revealed a profile of participants. The following balance was represented: “*More than 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their participation in the program influenced the way they think, as well as their work*”.<sup>347</sup> One of the respondents of the evaluation, Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, the former ASEAN Secretary General said: “*The most useful thing about the meeting was seeing how others think about the subject and whether there is room for middle ground and balance.*”<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Gaens, "ASEM as a Tool to "Bridge the Cultural Divide".

<sup>346</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 195

<sup>347</sup> ASEF, "Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations: Programme Evaluation. Executive Summary," (Singapore: Asia Europe Foundation, 2009). P. 4

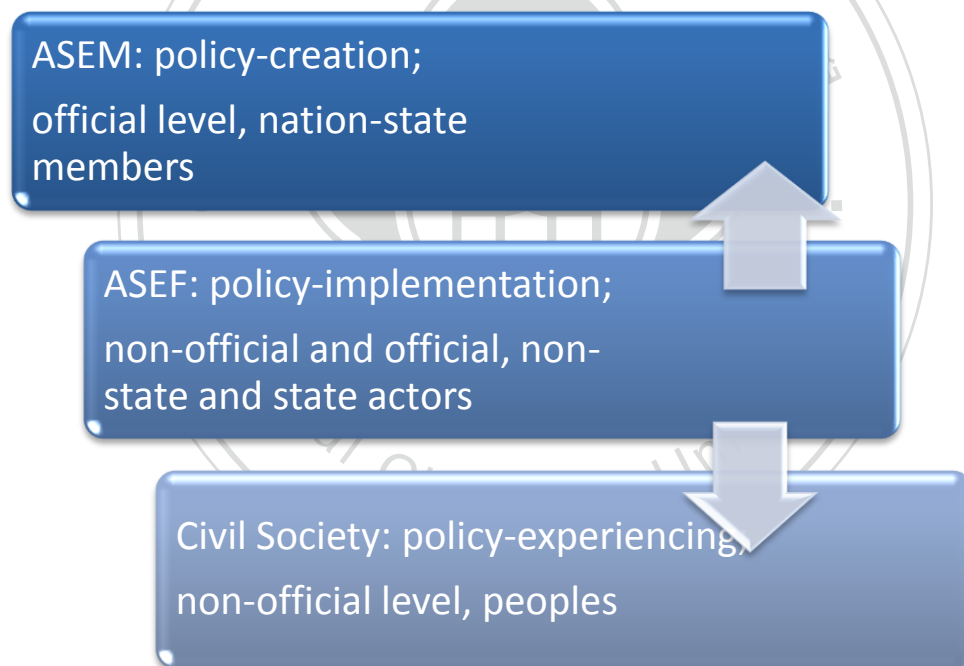
<sup>348</sup> Ibid. P. 2



- Asia Europe Foundation University Alumni Network (ASEFUAN) – is a post-event result of one of ASEF’s flagship programs, the ASEF University Programme which facilitates inter-cultural exchange between students from Asia and Europe, running from 1998. The ASEF University Alumni Network was established in 2002, collecting alumni from the ASEF University Programme. ASEFUAN has become an independent non-profit organization continuing the spirit of intercultural dialogue among the young generation of Asia and Europe. ASEFUAN is an example of continuous impact of ASEF work beyond ASEF activities.

To give a clear picture of the nature of ASEF’s work, I suggest the following chart:

Graph 17: Positioning levels of ASEM and ASEF work:



Source: Author’s analysis

While ASEM’s vision is to serve as a bridge between the regions of Asia and Europe, the ASEF’s role is to serve as a bridge among the member governments’ commitments and implementation at the civil societies’ level. In such setting, connectivity in both directions serves pivotal role.

*“ASEF serves a dual function as a connecting agent or interface between the two regions. Firstly, ASEF promotes ASEM’s civil society dimension, with a view to ensuring that the process exceeds the purely governmental level and also enhances interaction between the peoples of the two regions. ASEF thus serves as a linking agent between civil society, academic institutions, NGOs and professional organizations on the one hand, and Asian and European governments on the other.”*<sup>349</sup>

### **5.2.2. ASEM recognition and endorsement of ASEF**

Following all the official statements from the ASEM Summits, ASEF appears to be a successful creation of the ASEM process. From the first Summit that supported the idea of creating the Foundation, to the second Summit that welcomed ASEF, it has later become a regular habit that ASEF is mentioned as a recognized vehicle in increasing mutual understanding between the two regions and promoting people-to-people contacts (ASEM 2000, ASEM 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012).<sup>350</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not until the ASEM 4<sup>th</sup> Summit in 2002 that the cultural agenda gained attention. The ASEM4 reflected the general stress present after 9/11 terrorist attacks, as it brought issues of culture, religion, and mutual understanding into political consideration. Since then the third pillar has been regarded as a way to address the adverse consequences of globalization and as a way to fight the root causes of terrorism and international crime.

The year 2001 was also proclaimed by the UN as the “United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations” which gave higher priority to the issues of inter-civilizational dialogue in ASEM during 2002. ASEM4 also endorsed the Conference on Cultures and Civilization (COCC), one of the ASEF flagship programs, which was followed by the first conference in Beijing in December 2003 with initiative of China, Denmark, France, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Issues such as enhanced efforts in educational and cultural exchanges to prevent prejudice and stereotypes were identified.

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<sup>349</sup> Geans, "ASEM as a Tool to Bridge the Cultural Divide." P. 87

<sup>350</sup> All ASEM Chairman’s Statements are available on ASEM official websites:  
<http://www.aseminfoboard.org/summit-statement.html> (Last accessed May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

The decennial report on ASEM recognized the multilateral efforts on improving the insufficient understanding between Asia and Europe:

*“ASEM aims to counter the Huntington scenario and promote ‘unity in diversity’, drawing on the dialogue and confidence-building character, specifically addressing the role of education, access to information and the involvement of civil society”.*<sup>351</sup>

The following Summit ASEM5, held in 2004 in Hanoi, adopted the “ASEM Declaration on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations”, which added the agenda on creativity and the exchange of ideas, as well as promotion of sustainable and responsible cultural tourism, the protection and promotion of cultural resources, and strengthening the capacity of ASEF. Coordinated by ASEF the “Talks on the Hill” Program, an exclusive dialogue platform engaging leaders and opinion creators to discuss sensitive issues such as religion and human rights, was initiated that year. With that trend, ASEM started to pay more attention to a people-oriented agenda, such as health, education, and dialogue. The Bali Inter-Faith Dialogue Meeting was held on July 21-22, 2005, resulted in the Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony with International Community, which emphasized the shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance through practical actions in the fields of education, culture, media, and religion and society.<sup>352</sup>

With such settings, the third pillar gained more weight in political dialogue, but it also started to receive recognition from scholars:

*“As to the socio-cultural pillar, it is perceived by many observers as presenting the most significant results. The Conferences on Cultures and Civilizations and the Interfaith Dialogue are good examples of an emerging ‘ASEM soft power’ to promote mutual understanding, which should continue to be developed in the future.”*<sup>353</sup>

<sup>351</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 130

<sup>352</sup> "Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith within the International Community: Unity in Diversity," (2005). Available online: [http://www.asef.org/images/docs/868-Bali\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.asef.org/images/docs/868-Bali_Declaration.pdf) [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>353</sup> Rui Pereira, "The Helsinki Summit and the future course of Asia–Europe Meeting," *Asia Europe Journal* 5, no. 1 (2007). P. 21

*“In-depth exchanges are also treated over international and regional situation. The peoples of Asia and Europe are dedicated to dialogue and cooperation so as to enhance strategic mutual trust, create enabling regional security environment and commonly address conventional and non-conventional security threats.”<sup>354</sup>*

Recognition of the activities lead by ASEF has a higher impact, not only because of the thematic cooperation, but also because of ASEF’s extensive network reaching United Nations’ agencies. The partnership with UN Alliance of Civilization through the cultural cooperation, the Dialogue of Civilization Program specifically, has been particularly valued by ASEM:

*“ASEM-partners recognized the valuable contribution of mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated initiatives and their results at the national, regional and interregional levels to promote inter-civilization, intercultural and interfaith dialogue.”<sup>355</sup>*

Clearly, the Asia-Europe relations cannot be further strengthened without building understanding and trust among the peoples, which is done through dialogue, interaction and mutual learning on the civil society level.

#### **5.2.2.1. Who needs whom more?**

ASEF is a child of ASEM and would not have come to life, nor can it sustain itself if not for the Asia Europe Meeting. Nevertheless, it became, up to a certain degree, an independent organ, which also is essential for ASEM’s functionality because its role as the virtual secretariat of ASEM.<sup>356</sup> As such, the relationship between the two is based on an organic dependency.

ASEM InfoBoard – a virtual “secretariat” of ASEM, established only in 2004, is maintained by ASEF Public Affairs Department. It performs the following functions:

(1) Archive function: publicly accessible information on ASEM activities and initiatives;

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<sup>354</sup> Kim, "ASEM 7 and developments of its socio-cultural dimension." P. 6

<sup>355</sup> Ioan Voicu, "Asia and Europe: In search of a New Partnership," *ABAC Journal* 27, no. 3 (2007). P. 9

<sup>356</sup> The official website of ASEM ([www.aseminfoboard.org](http://www.aseminfoboard.org)) is managed by ASEF’s Public Affairs Department.

(2) Recipient function: to establish an “information reception desk” for the transfer of information from and to host countries of initiatives;

(3) Dissemination function: to disseminate updated information through the website and/or periodically send information in the format of an electronic magazine.<sup>357</sup>

The blurring balance of this dependency is showcased in the reflections of people directly involved in the process: *“Who floats and who is the anchor giving direction to whom?”*<sup>358</sup> ASEF staff expressed their opinion on the working relationship between ASEF and ASEM, where there is a certain degree of frustration among ASEF staff in regard how the relationship between ASEF and ASEM is built.

The following are quoted interviews that the author collected on the questions related to the relationship between ASEM and ASEF:

- ❖ *“It’s irregular”*
- ❖ *“It’s frustrating”*
- ❖ *“It could be better”*
- ❖ *“It could be closer”*
- ❖ *“There could be better communication”*
- ❖ *“ASEM often “forgets” about ASEF”*
- ❖ *“ASEF relies to political commitment of ASEM. It needs recognition”*
- ❖ *“ASEF needs stronger political commitment, particularly because of uncertainty and stress over the financial support. However, if funding contributions became compulsory, it would lose informal nature. Question marks would also be put on the issue-based interest and capacity.”*<sup>359</sup>

These descriptions show that people directly involved in the operation process experience certain limitation that overcast the coordination and communication between ASEM policies and ASEF implementation.

<sup>357</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 166

<sup>358</sup> Interviewee 13, June 2012

<sup>359</sup> Quotes collected through series of interviews with ASEF staff.

On the other hand, ASEM's opinion on ASEF work has been satisfactory. The Asia Europe Meeting officially declares that its three major achievements are:

- (1) being a Dialogue Facilitator,
- (2) a Policy-Making Laboratory, and
- (3) Managing Growing Europe-Asia Relations.<sup>360</sup>

From what has been described earlier, it can be seen that all three are directly connected to ASEF contribution. ASEF cannot take the credit for the achievements of ASEM on its own, because its work is mandated by ASEM. However, ASEM would not have reached such an outcome if not for the work of ASEF. In other words, being a political forum and a summit of government leaders, ASEM alone cannot fulfil its mission of connecting the regions and engaging the peoples. Such recognition indicates that the role of ASEF is essential for the legitimacy, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the ASEM process.

In recent years ASEM has recognized that there is a need for a stronger commitment to ASEF's activities among the member states. It also realized that ASEF's position in decision-making processes should be strengthened. In the Chair's Statement of the most recent 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit in Lao PDR in November 2012 one can read:

*"Leaders commended the achievement of Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in promoting mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges during the past fifteen years. They recognized ASEF's active role in promoting Asia-Europe dialogue and cooperation and enhancing visibility of ASEM through effective implementation of its priorities. They also commended ASEF's participation in ASEM Chairman Support Group (ACSG) and its role in the ASEM cooperation. They called on ASEM partners to enhance, through the regularity of their contribution, the financial sustainability of ASEF and encouraged active participation of the new ASEM partners in it."*<sup>361</sup>

The recognition of the need to elevate ASEF's position to higher level of representation in the ASEM Summits can be interpreted both ways: (1) recognition of ASEF's contribution to the

<sup>360</sup> ASEM Infoboard: <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/component/k2/item/10.html?Itemid=245nu-achievements.html> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>361</sup> ASEM, "Chair's Statement of the 9th ASEM Summit," (Vientiane, 2012).

overall inter-regional process, but also at the same time (2) the limited “say” that ASEF has had in the top level of ASEM decision-making.

### 5.3. Problems and limitations

Limitations of ASEF reflect the limitations of ASEM. The Asia-Europe Meeting ASEM is an institutional framework for Asia-Europe relations, characterized by a high degree of informality and “non-committal negotiations”<sup>362</sup>. The cooperation character has somewhat different forms between Asian and European sides. Asian interstate cooperation is characterized by non-binding, non-committal arrangements, by low-key consultations, and informal and personalized meetings<sup>363</sup>, whereas European cooperation culture is based on clear, legally binding and authoritative decisions.

This gap in political culture has posed a serious issue in the process of Europe dialogue. In multilateral settings, the European output-orientation with fixed and binding rules and norms contradicted with Asian dialogue-orientation and preference for informality and non-binding agreements.

Since ASEM does not have a physical institution, it is interesting to observe ASEF as the reflection of ASEM. ASEF has been praised for its successes of bridging peoples of two regions and designing joint cooperation projects. During its 16 years of existence, ASEF has contributed immensely in promoting dialogue between Asia and Europe. However, at the same time, just like ASEM, it has been criticized for its elitist nature for reaching only to a certain groups, particularly the middle class).<sup>364</sup> ASEF works on the mandate of ASEM, which is highly a top-down process, could not avoid the political nature of its activities. Envisioned to be responsible for the cooperation between the civil societies of Europe and Asia, it struggled with the

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<sup>362</sup> Katja Freistein “Beyond the Taboos? The opportunities and limitations of Asian-European track-two dialogue” in: Jurgen Ruland, Gunter Schubert, Gunter Schucher and Cornelia Storz (eds.) 2008. *Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks of Global Governance?* P.223

<sup>363</sup> Amitav Acharya. *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia. ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>364</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, *ASEM--the Asia-Europe Meeting process : from sexy summit to strong partnership?* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs, 2002). P. 10-11



obstruction from non-democratic member governments.<sup>365</sup> This reflects the limitations that the condition of coherence of the ASEF works with ASEM process.

Nevertheless ASEF has managed to engage cooperation programs involving non-states actors from both continents in wide spectrum of fields. This is a contribution in terms of participatory of public in the originally top-down inter-regionalism of ASEM. The idea of “civil society” earned tolerance from the Beijing and Hanoi governments after many negotiations, and ASEF managed to organize the conference “Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe” in Barcelona in 2004. This shows a slow buy-in to some democratic concepts by the Asian non-democracies as a result internationalization, cultural encounters and ideas and values flow. From that perspective, ASEF might serve an important role as a facilitator for the democratization of the Asia-European dialogue.<sup>366</sup>

Like any organization, ASEF faces limitations. As indicated earlier, there exist many contradictory self-definitions of ASEF within the organization which reflect its identity crisis. Additional uncertainty about the organization’s vision causes a certain deadlock in terms of future direction. A thorough observation of ASEF reveals the following problems:

### **5.3.1. Interest and funding: who cares; who doesn’t, and why?**

While all member states of ASEM by default become members of ASEF, and while by default there is a principle to involve each member equally, the active participation varies significantly. There is an “*inequality among the member states and unequal commitment, unequal interest.*”<sup>367</sup>

Long term observations show that there are obvious post-colonial linkages; making previous colonial states more interested in cooperation and exchange.<sup>368</sup> Attention deficit is echoed in the funding pattern. Members’ financial contribution to ASEF is based on moral obligation rather than legal obligation. The irregular character causes certain difficulties in

<sup>365</sup> The case of People’s Republic of China, disagreeing on the inclusion of “civil societies” in the process was described by: Bersick, ““The democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: the role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments”,.”

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Interviewee 10, June 2012

<sup>368</sup> Interviewee 14, June 2012

predicting the availability of the resources, and hence affects operational planning, and becomes one of the main challenges that the Foundation needs to deal with.

However, making contribution obligatory would change the legal status of the organization itself. While it continues to grow, with new members coming on board, the funding for activities has become tighter. Growing to three “other participants” in 2010, only Australia and New Zealand contributed, whereas Russia has not made any financial commitments. There is no information about the financial commitment of the newest members who joined in late 2012: Bangladesh, Switzerland and Norway as yet.<sup>369</sup>

At the foundation of ASEM there was a will to advance Asia-Europe inter-regionalism on every level. Given the current global circumstances, the problem that ASEF now faces is how to sustain that mutual interest. Especially in the time that each of the region is overwhelmed with its internal issues. Europe’s preoccupation with financial crisis and Asia’s focus on regional process may explain why inter-regionalism has been receiving less attention.

The British withdrawal from the funds, and Greece, Italy and Portugal absence from the list of financial contributors for 2011<sup>370</sup>, can be seen as a sign of decreasing interest. Particularly in the cases of countries that already have established forms and channels to exercise cultural projects, such as the British Council of Great Britain. They prefer to pay more on unilateral promotion, rather than to be a part of multilateral cooperation.<sup>371</sup> Although ASEF has been allocated with trust funds from certain members to run specific thematic programs<sup>372</sup>, the predictability of allocations remains problematic. This fact draws attention back to the issue of interest, or more precisely, its imbalance among the member states.

As the ASEF leadership has expressed, there is a value of dialogue and interaction between the regions, and ASEF might serve as a reminder of that. Looking back at the time when ASEF was established, it was Asia who struggled with the Asian financial crisis. At that time,

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<sup>369</sup> ASEF financial report: <http://www.asef.org/ebooks/annualreport/2011/Financial-Information/> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>370</sup> ASEF financial report: <http://www.asef.org/ebooks/annualreport/2011/Financial-Information/> [Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

<sup>371</sup> Interviewee 2, June 2012

<sup>372</sup> ASEF financial report : <http://www.asef.org/ebooks/annualreport/2011/Financial-Information/> Last accessed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012]

ASEM and ASEF's meetings were dominated by European suggestions and recommendations for Asia. As the former Deputy Director of ASEF, Ambassador Nguyen Duc Khanh from Vietnam put it:

*"We hope now to do the same. Now Asia can advise Europe on overcoming the crisis. This is the value of mutual sharing and learning from experiences."*<sup>373</sup>

ASEF, indeed, presents different degree of incentives, depending on the international position of each member. Cultural agenda serves well the purpose of public diplomacy for each of members, but is prioritized variously. One of explanations suggests that certain countries that have strong cultural diplomacy tools or may already have other mechanisms of self-promoting outside of ASEF framework, such as the British Council, Alliance Francaise, Instituto Cervantes, or Goethe Institut. Whereas the members that do not have such mechanisms, are keen to utilize the publicity and outreach that ASEF provides.

For smaller countries, such as Vietnam, ASEF has proven to be an important forum. It is seen in active Vietnamese participation, initiating new programs and eagerly hosting meetings. ASEF provides a convenient channel for equal communication and for reaching multiple actors. Participation in ASEF networks serves well the purpose of self-promoting, raising international profile, and practices of internationalization at a low cost through multilateral summitry. For a country like Vietnam, with limited means for public diplomacy, unlike the previously mentioned cases that have their own well-established self-promotion institutions, ASEF provides a perfect venue for low-cost multilateral diplomacy, information exchange, as well as learning and socializing with other international actors.

China represents another interesting case, because of its "reputation" and growing significance in the world. As it is expansively pursuing its "benevolent power" image, ASEF and its cultural cooperation program serves a good platform for Beijing to reach out to a wider public than just its direct neighbors. While it has its Confucius Institute as a mean for cultural diplomacy, the ASEF settings allow it to reconfirm its "soft power" influence by initiating, funding and taking leadership in mutually beneficial projects like cultural and intellectual

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<sup>373</sup> Interviewee 2, June 2012. The interviewee refers to the Asian financial crisis in 1997 which happened soon after the establishment of ASEF and the current financial crisis in Europe.

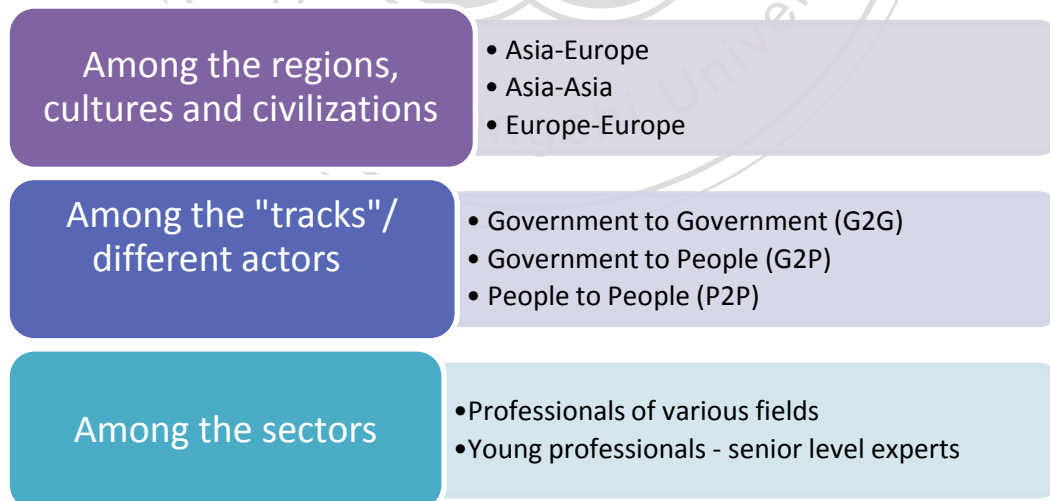
cooperation. China has been constantly one of the biggest donors since ASEF's inception (about 240,000 USD/year<sup>374</sup>).

A confirmation of ASEF's value in the eyes of China was expressed by a Chinese seconded staff: *"The PRC values the friendliness that ASEF nurtures; and recognizes that mutual understanding is important."*<sup>375</sup> Unlike the Confucius Institute, ASEF is more neutral because of its multilateral settings. Being active in ASEF activities can serve well the mission of building China's image as a significant contributor to the multilateral "cause". It also gives Beijing a venue to socialize with others on "safe ground" on the non-conflicting issues like education and culture.

### 5.3.2. Connecting but disconnected

The Asia-Europe Foundation works on several levels. Apart from being a bridge between Asia and Europe, it positions itself also as an interlocutor between the governments and civil societies. The internal structure of the organization and the levels it works on, as well as actors that it engages, set an interesting map that can be summed up as following:

Graph 18: ASEF's Axis of communication



Source: Author's research

<sup>374</sup> Interviewee 11, June 2012

<sup>375</sup> Interviewee 11, June 2012

ASEF is governed by the Board of Governors, who are responsible for determining the Foundation's policies, programs and priorities, as well as ensuring the efficient use of the Foundation's resources, approving Foundation's annual reports, budget and work plans. The Board's decision is to reflect the ASEM's interest as a whole. Apart from the Board of Governors, who are officials designated by their governments, the Executive Office with the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director who are also appointed by the Board for the term of four years. The directors of each department are also to be seconded from the member governments.

Professional staff is recruited among citizens of ASEM members based on their professional profile. Despite the diversity, cross-cultural communication is not a concern, rather communication on the vertical levels, diplomats – staff, is of higher difficulty. Because of such structure there have developed distinct mindsets within one organization. Despite the fact that the organization is not a big one (at the peak it reached 57 employees including seconded staff<sup>376</sup>), there is a strong sense of bureaucracy.

Graph 19: Levels of staff



Source: Author's research

<sup>376</sup> Information obtained from internal documentation of ASEF. June 2012

Difficulties of communication appear also, to the lesser extent, at horizontal level, where there are limits in internal coordination among the departments. Partially it is due to the original structure of thematically divided departments. For more integrated coordination, ASEF operation needs reforming towards cooperation based on more cross-cutting issues, rather than department-based work.

Given the high staff turn-over<sup>377</sup>, including at the top management level (the appointed term is three to five years), the vision of ASEF changes with every new leadership. The personality of leadership affects heavily the overall performance, image and capacity of the organization. Lack of fixed and lasting regulations or vision statements makes ASEF more flexible, dynamic, and open to new input. On the other hand, there is a challenge to continuity, long-term vision which forces ASEF to constantly re-defining itself.

### 5.3.3. Visibility issues

Visibility is an important factor affecting an organization's effectiveness, credibility and legitimacy, and reinforce the status of 'actorness'. Paradoxical enough, despite of the wide scope of members and breadth of activities ASEM and ASEF suffer from insufficient visibility.

Unlike Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEM does not have a strong media profile. An interviewee said that it is due to a lack of "*Obama factor*"<sup>378</sup> whose attendance to a meeting would raise the profile and gain media attention to the organization. While there is no need to explain what APEC or ASEAN is; awareness about ASEM and ASEF is yet to be built-up. Consequently, ASEF often remains unknown outside of the range of its participants. And after 15 years of existence it still faces the problem of defining itself. ASEF, with the unmeasurable impact of "enhancing understanding", suffers inadequate recognition. And, paradoxically enough, while the Foundation is a bridge connecting Asia and Europe, because of

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<sup>377</sup> Only 5 people stayed longer than 5 years within the organization. Information obtained from ASEF internal documentation; June 2012

<sup>378</sup> Interviewee 15, June 2012. "*Obama factor*" is a comparison of a strong and attracting public attention personality, in this case the U.S. President Barrack Obama. ASEM, unlike APEC, does not have a leader that would be able to raise the media profile of the Summits.

the fact that it is based in Singapore, it seems like it is losing the ground with what is happening in Europe.

Quite a number of ASEF staff expressed it is “*working on one leg*”<sup>379</sup>. This comparison is to describe the imbalanced structure of ASEF, working primarily in Singapore and hence being closer to Asian side. It is missing the “other leg” in Europe, which limits its accessibility and visibility in Europe. Some staff believes that the distance limits visibility and connection and thus this explains the recent budget cut from some European members.<sup>380</sup> Regardless of how active the organization is, ASEF’s identity and visibility is tightly connected to the visibility and performance of ASEM. As much as ASEF works on the civil society levels to promote ASEM’s visibility, ASEM needs to promote itself better for enhancing also the profile of its and ASEF’s work.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has given a thorough analysis of the cultural cooperation pillar of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM). It has argued that ASEF mirrors the ASEM process with its weaknesses, and ASEM mirrors ASEF in its strengths. Among the positive contributions, there is the exercise of multilateralism. For diplomats seconded to the organization, it is also a training ground that allows them to adjust from unilateral (representing their own country) to a multilateral approach.

Multilateralism, as much as it is a strong asset of ASEF, can also pose difficulties in terms of organization’s leadership and vision. Multilateral cooperation in such setting of Asian and European nations is relatively new and ASEF represents that learning process. It is a venue, still imperfect but engaging, for collaboration and exchanged of ideas among the Asian and European governments and peoples.

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<sup>379</sup> Interviewee 6 and 14, June 2012. The expression “working on one leg” is to describe the imbalanced structure of ASEF, working primarily in Singapore and hence being closer to Asian side. It is missing the “other leg” in Europe, which limits its accessibility and visibility in Europe.

<sup>380</sup> Interviewee 6, June 2012



The communication bridge is another relevant contribution of ASEF that it has been able to exceed ASEM process. ASEF's activities have become a neutral venue effectively connecting not only region-to-region but also Government-to-People and sector-to-sector communication. ASEF helped international society to realize the importance of communication and understanding the differences. Communication was elevated to a prime issue, when looking at the multicultural background of the organization's staff itself, and it determinates the effectiveness of ASEF's work is the human factor. As discovered from long-term observation, the organization suffers coordination challenges among the levels of representation within ASEF.

Many criticisms that ASEM faces also concern ASEF. Among the most common disapprovals are the following characteristics: elitisms, being broad but shallow, and having limited impact. Noting the shortcomings of ASEF, these often related to the political conditionality of the Asia-Europe Meeting process itself. The high position of government and diplomatic weight in operating ASEF shows that the third pillar of socio-cultural cooperation has not been separated from, or shall not operate outside of, the political framework. Although ASEF is designated to work on cultural cooperation, it is conditioned by political agenda and limitations. Political personalities and member states funding contributions are among them. Despite the funding contributions disproportions; it struggles to maintain the equal commitment in the multilateral context and regional context.

ASEM's strengths are drawn from ASEF's successes. Cultural cooperation is a "signature" inter-regional cooperation that differentiates ASEM from other regional and trans-regional institutions, and ASEF is at the same time the best product of ASEM endeavour. In the functionality of ASEF, it is a living representation of Asia-Europe relations in all aspects. Despite the limitations this might imply, ASEF is well aware of the responsibilities of being a dialogue facilitator. As an interlocutor between governments and civil society of member states, it creates a safe space for communication that does not alienate any of its partners. ASEF "only" serves as a house of interaction and it would be unreasonable to expect that the understanding between such diverse civilizations would rely upon such an organization as ASEF.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Interviewee 19, June 2012

Having this in mind, the criticisms about limited relevance and lack of “binding” results from the meetings might no longer adequate. The results of ASEF work can only be as effective as the participants want them to be. It is important that Asian and European states and peoples have a venue for discussion, for building networks, exhibiting values and expertise that Asia and Europe can have to offer each other, searching for issues of common interest, and coming up with policy-recommendations.

ASEF itself may not change the nature of cooperation between Asia and Europe, but it can promote the very need of closer and more tangible collaboration. Having provided a communication avenue for over 16 years, ASEF has a high potential to become a recognized expert in Asia-Europe relations and comparative regionalism studies. Whatever the praise and criticism on the contribution of ASEM, it is likely to continue its existence and have its position on the global map of international and interregional cooperation. While not free from shortcomings, it is unlikely that ASEF’s role in sustaining ASEM’s relevance will decrease.

In analyzing ASEM’s cultural cooperation, it is essential to evaluate the ASEF’s work. This chapter has examined the strengths and weaknesses of the Asia-Europe Foundation, arguing that they are equivalent to the achievements and limitations of ASEM, as ASEF is the driving force of ASEM’s performance.

The previous chapter discussed norms and values differences between the actors involved in ASEM process to illustrate the difficulties in cooperation. Issues such as human rights and democratization were raised as examples of norms and agenda differences. The previous section of this chapter discussed the low-key third pillar manifested by the Asia-Europe Foundation and the role it plays in engaging civil societies.

This chapter continued the discussion by bringing together the two above to examine the development of inclusion the human rights agenda through the cultural cooperation organized by ASEF. It showcases the interactive process on the people’s level and how ASEM inter-regionalism was able to incorporate the civil society. It outlined ASEF’s contribution in convening practices and knowledge sharing, creating habit of meeting and consultations not only at political level but also at experts’ level. This connects to the argument of epistemic community creation where expertise and knowledge are communicated and influence the decision-making

process at political level. Moreover, I argue that through such exchanges and communication, a sense of shared destiny is development on a wider scale despite the contextual differences and regional divide.

I have argued that through sustainable contacts, exchanges of knowledge and information, the actors have created a sense of mutual understanding. ASEF has been working towards finding common grounds, cooperation agenda for both regions, focusing on the shared experiences. In my models of cognition, such a habit of exchanging knowledge leads to a reflexive acquisition of knowledge and understanding, which is the second stage of a cognitive process of regionalism.



### Reflexive acquisition

- **Building identity not only on contrast but by understanding**
- Change of perceptions and behaviours

**PART THREE: CHANGING ASIA, CHANGING EUROPE**



## CHAPTER SIX

### CHANGE OF THE ACTORS, CHANGE OF THE PERCEPTIONS

The second dimension of this analysis focuses on the role of ASEAN. ASEM's development is assessed in the through the eyes of the changing circumstances affecting ASEAN. Also to be taken into consideration is the internal development of ASEAN and the capacity to act as a regional entity. This study argues that ASEM has the potential for ASEAN to utilize. In the same time it argues that ASEAN has an important say in the direction and performance of ASEM. To evaluate both, let's look at the changes that have occurred since the inception of ASEM in 1990s.

This chapter comes back to the inter- and sub-regional levels of analysis, focusing on the change within ASEAN and ASEM and how they affect each other.

As much as the previous Chapter Five underlined the reflexive acquisition of understanding and creating a habit of knowledge exchange between the regions, this chapter focuses on the second dimension of that level: the change.

**Reflexive  
acquisition**

- Building identity not only on contrast but by understanding
- **Change of perceptions and behaviours**

#### 6.1. The changing ASEAN

*“ASEAN has a promising future. It has its limitations, but history tells us that relations among states are not permanent. Domestic circumstances change, leaders change, the world changes.”*<sup>382</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Wilfrido V. Villacorta, "Strengthening the Foundation for an ASEAN Community," in *ASEAN Matters! Reflecting on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, ed. Lee Yoong Yoong (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2011). P. 313

Who would expect in 1967 that ASEAN would come to the rule-based organization with own Charter and that it would have its own human rights body? To see the changes, let's track the gradual transformations, accomplishments and remaining shortcomings.

Many criticism of ASEAN pointed the lack of applied evidence. Martin Jones and Michael L. R. Smith were sharper in saying “*ASEAN is making process, not progress*”.<sup>383</sup> ASEAN has been criticized from outside more than from inside about the effectiveness. All the declarations and plans of actions towards a community have been crushed as “*rhetorical wishing*”, particularly in comparative setting with the advanced commitments of the European Union.<sup>384</sup>

Criticisms refer to internal matters point out the elitism of the organization. “*ASEAN is animated by a narrow elite accord and very little is evident in the way of genuine community building*.”<sup>385</sup> But as a defending point, Rodolfo Severino said that ASEAN was primarily set up by the governments and it remains an inter-governmental institution, which has on top of that recently started to pay more attention to its people's voices.<sup>386</sup>

The organization has sustained severe ongoing criticisms, but also enjoyed much of appreciation, as an example of long-term observers and supporters of ASEAN published a multi-author book named *ASEAN Matters! Reflecting on the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations*<sup>387</sup>. Some of them were able to point out concrete examples of input that ASEAN has given to the regional and global politics. ASEAN, from a sub-regional organization, it is now a recognized player, with substantial economic boost, trade networks and significant contribution to the regional peace. Not only has it been invited to the Group of 20 (G20) but also looked upon as the indispensable link in the Asia-Pacific region. With strong dialogue partners, including all the major powers and middle powers globally, ASEAN is the only and the smallest interlocutor that can boast such extensive networks.

<sup>383</sup> Martin Jones and Michael L. R. Smith, "Making process, not progress: ASEAN and the evolving East Asian regional order," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>384</sup> Interview with a European official from the EU External Services, Singapore, June 2012.

<sup>385</sup> James Cotton, "ASEAN and regional institutions in the Asia Pacific: Ambitions vs. Performance," *Pacific Review* 20, no. 4 (2006). P/ 106

<sup>386</sup> Interview, Taipei, December 2009.

<sup>387</sup> Lee Yoong Yoong ed., *ASEAN matters! Reflecting on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2011).

However, ASEAN has many critics as supporters. Many scholars agree on the essentialness of ASEAN for the regional stability. Mark Beeson said without ASEAN the region would “descend into conflict if not chaos”.<sup>388</sup> Others have recognized its contribution to the regional architecture. ASEAN is considered “*the longest running and most institutionally developed regional arrangement in Asia*”.<sup>389</sup>

Amitav Acharya underlined ASEAN’s achievements in peace building of the conflictious region: “*ASEAN’s accomplishments to date are hard to ignore.*”<sup>390</sup> As ASEAN developed, “[it] has advanced as a combination of three actors: coalition building vis-à-vis common threat perception and extra-regional powers, soft institution building, and an emerging regional identity.”<sup>391</sup>

It can be argued that ASEAN has set a standard of interacting within Asia region. Other regional institutions have been affected by the modules of ASEAN Way and the soft institutionalization. It is also fair to say that the ASEAN norms have spread, to different extends, also to extra-regional actors as well. It shall be illustrated in the following section treating about the changes of ASEAN’s position.

### 6.1.1. ASEAN and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s challenges

Chapter three has extensively covered the historical development of over four decades of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This section addresses the current challenges and transformation of the ASEAN. The changes that have occurred within ASEAN are essential, as this dissertation argues, for the Asia-Europe Meeting’s development. To understand the interests,

<sup>388</sup> Marc Beeson, *Institutions of the Asia Pacific: ASEAN, APEC and beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). P. 100

<sup>389</sup> Cuong Nguyen and Clay Wescott, "Result-based monitoring of regional integration and cooperation in ASEAN," in *Governing Regional Integration for Development: Monitoring Experiences, Methods, and Prospects*, ed. Philippe De Lombaerde, Antoni Esteveordal, and Kati Suominen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). P. 121

<sup>390</sup> Amitav Acharya, "ASEAN at 40: Mid-Life Rejuvenation?," *Foreign Affairs*, August 15, 2007 2007.

<sup>391</sup> Jorn Dosch, "Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific: ASEAN," in *The New Global Politics of the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Michael K. Connors (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004). P. 87



motivations and commitments of ASEAN to ASEM, it is crucial to understand ASEAN's internal matters and the challenges it faces.

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, ASEAN, in its middle age stage, is questioned about its direction, relevance and contribution to the regional development. Whether it remains a relevant force in the region, and of what relevance, is still to be answered. It is a fact that “*ASEAN is too important as a symbol of political stability and regional cooperation in Southeast Asia to be easily discarded.*”<sup>392</sup> As demonstrated throughout its history, ASEAN has served two major contributions to its members: first of all, it provided a forum for its members to meet on regular basis. Thanks to that, an atmosphere of trust-building and mutual recognition has been built.

Secondly, it provided its members with a louder and more influential voice on the international stage than any single ASEAN state could have on its own. However, the history also shows that ASEAN has been more effective in dealing with an external focus rather than with internal issues. This goes back to the *raison d'être* of ASEAN, which was to protect the sovereign rights of its members. With strong emphasis on the non-interference principle and prohibition from using force to settle disputes, ASEAN contributes to the regional peace. While some intra-ASEAN conflicts remain unsolved and keep casting a shadow to the regional growth<sup>393</sup>, the overall conditions have changed. ASEAN needs to adapt to the changes, and the non-interference principle needs to be re-examined.

Identity has become a pressing issue for ASEAN in recent years; particularly with Vision 2015 and the Charter envisioning ASEAN's spirit of unity. The issue of regional identity often involves discussion on cultural practices. ASEAN's preference for non-legalistic and non-binding measures is a manifestation of cultural characteristics of the organization. The ASEAN Way, embodied with cultural norms like non-confrontation, has drawn the course of ASEAN policy since its inception.

Moreover, in the past, mutual suspicion among the members did not motivate the regional identity building. “*Most of the ASEAN states have only a tentative grip upon their sovereignty. It is difficult to create an influential regional identity when national identities are*

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<sup>392</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P. 193

<sup>393</sup> Although problematic ASEAN disputes such as South China Sea and border issues are of key importance, but they exceed the scope of this dissertation; hence they are not going to be elaborated in this study.

*still in the process of formation.*”<sup>394</sup> Ironically, as ASEAN Way, a safe *modus operandi* accommodating the limited trust and fragile sovereignty, has contributed to a degree of “we-feeling” within the members.

Amitav Acharya underlined the role of socialization around the ASEAN Way. This distinctive institutional culture, has raised a sense of exceptionalism and “*has become a key aspect of ASEAN security discourse, and has facilitated community building*”<sup>395</sup>. The complex levels of ASEAN identity, including the role of the new members, and the distinction between elite-led regionalism process and general public consciousness about ASEAN will be further explored in the next section while explaining the nature of ASEAN.

Under current circumstances, with big powers joining the game – China’s rise posing both threats and opportunities, India’s growing influence zone, the come-back of the U.S. into regional architecture, and Japanese indecision whether to engage or not, etc. – there comes the matter of leadership. ASEAN “driver’s seat” position has been questioned. It seems that the organization also has been asking itself the same question.

Above section has explained the creation and transformation of ASEAN internal matters as a response to external conditions. The following part focuses on ASEAN external relations with the European Council, later transformed into the European Union, and the creation of multilateral forum of the Asia-Europe Meeting. As analysis shows the development of inter-regional dialogue was also influenced by factors that shaped ASEAN internal growth.

The central position of ASEAN in the East Asian regional processes is recognized due to its ability and contribution of bringing bigger neighbours to the same table under the name of ASEAN Plus mechanism. With ASEAN Plus Three format started in 1997, elaborated to other major partners from outside of the region. Continuity of the countries that are interested in the “ASEAN Plus” mechanism proves the growing importance of ASEAN. The ASEAN Plus Six have the same cohort as the East Asian Summit, ASEAN Plus 8 includes Russia and the United States. The mechanisms of ASEAN Pluses work not only in the multiple settings, but also on the individual states as well.

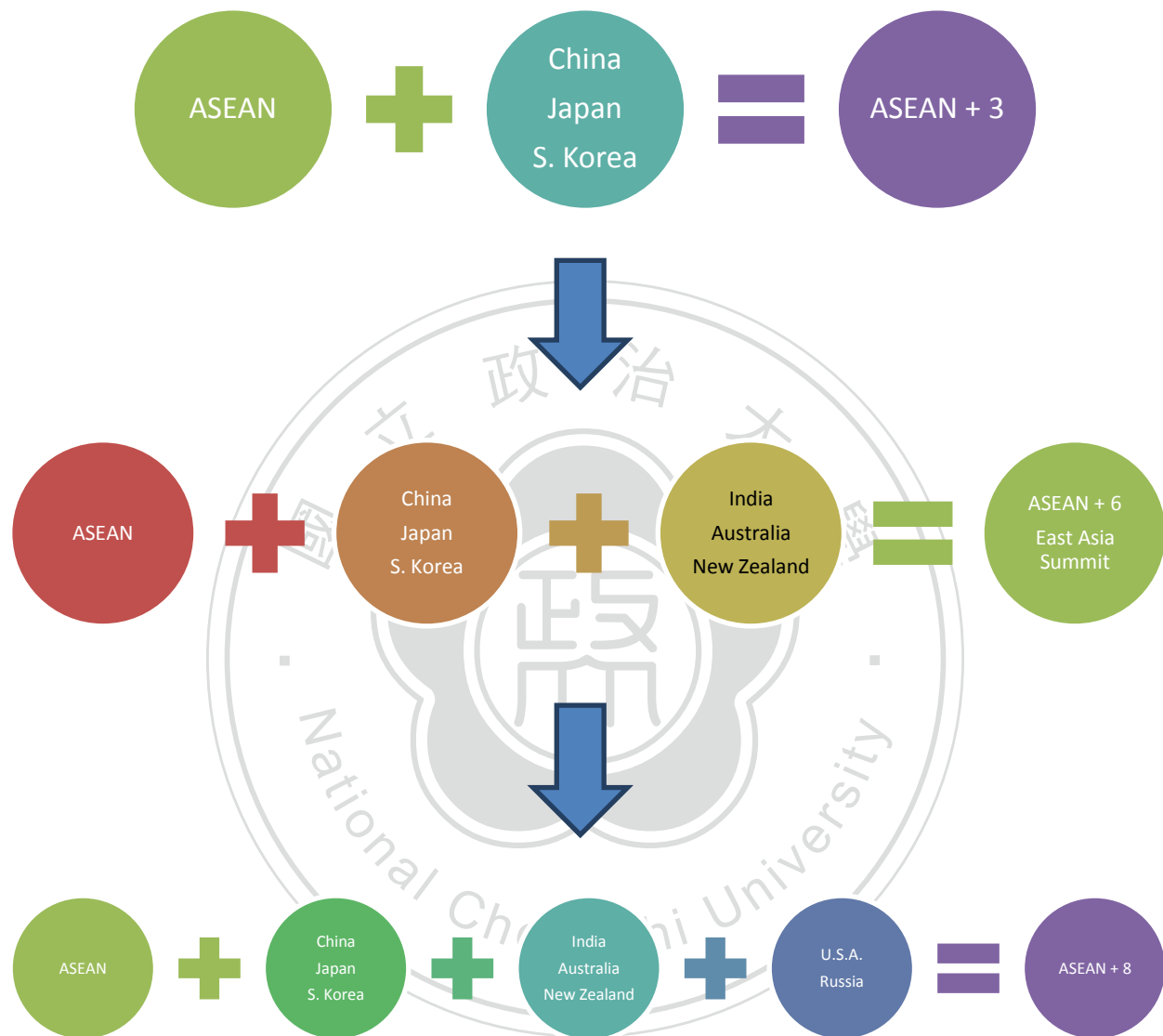
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<sup>394</sup> Narine, *Explaining ASEAN : regionalism in Southeast Asia*. P. 195

<sup>395</sup> Acharya, *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia : ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. P. 202

Illustration of ASEAN Plus partners can be chronologically summarized as the following:

Graph 20: Chronological development of ASEAN Plus mechanisms

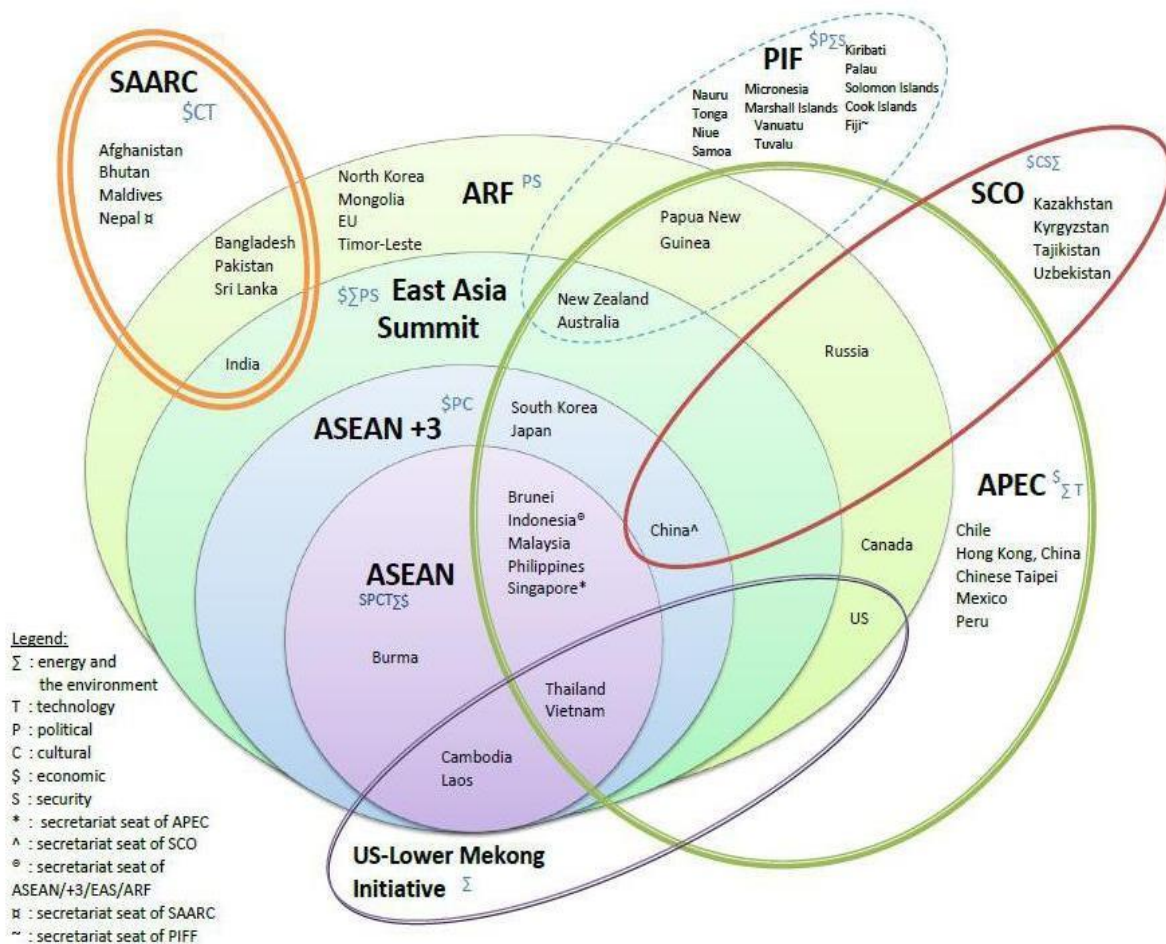


Source: Author's compilation

The above illustration gives the picture of who ASEAN was able to engage. Given the good climate for Asian regionalism, ASEAN has found itself in the position of, what it likes to

call itself, “driver”. The ASEAN leaders see the organization as a “conductor” of the big orchestra of strong individual players.<sup>396</sup>

Graph 21: Asia-Pacific regional architecture



Source: Center for Strategic and International Studies: <http://csis.org/files/images/Asia-Regional-Architecture-big.png>

ASEAN’s centrality has been challenged by competitive regional initiatives, including Japanese East Asian Economic Community and Australian idea of Asia-Pacific Community.

<sup>396</sup> Raden Mohammad Marty Mullana Natadegawa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. Speech given at the 27<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Moreover, the Chinese engagement into the regional processes changes the picture of potential leadership in the region.

Whether it is still capable of maintaining its centrality, ASEAN can boast take pride in its ability to spread its norms outside of its own circle. The accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) by Asian dialogue partners, as well as the European Union and the United States proves its position and contribution to the region's development.

Even outside of ASEAN's initiatives that had spilled-over to ASEAN Plus mechanism, its presence is strong in other regional and trans-regional frameworks.

#### **6.1.2. New agenda: The Charter, human rights and institutionalisation**

*"After the ASEAN Charter came into force in December 2008, a new ASEAN slowly emerged."*<sup>397</sup>

The Thai journalist who has been covering ASEAN for thirty years named it a *"happy family"* that have small quarrels some times, but always ending up *"peacefully without big casualties or bloodshed"*.<sup>398</sup> Two years since he wrote that, I had a chance to interview him at the 27<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Roundtable in June 2013 on the perception of ASEAN change. From the public interests point of view, ASEAN only appears with more "sensational" headlines, like issues of human rights or South China Sea. The organization has not received wide attention in terms of its nature and transformations.

Forty years after establishment, ASEAN signed the Charter, and for the first time gaining the legal personality. I stated in chapter three that the introduction of the Charter opens the fifth phase of ASEAN's existence. The significant change, or at least the call for change as its rhetoric evolves, leads ASEAN towards a tighter form of cooperation, creating an ASEAN community, a "community of caring societies".

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<sup>397</sup> Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Covering ASEAN for Three Decades," in *ASEAN Matters! Reflecting on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, ed. Lee Yoong Yoong (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2011). P. 41

<sup>398</sup> Ibid. P. 39

Prior to the Charter, ASEAN has been often criticized for the lack of institutionalization and legal tools, which considerably hampered the development of regionalisation. Too much affection to informality, so called moving with the pace comfortable for each of the members in the ASEAN Way spirit was considered the main reason for not advancing its regional integration. The Charter, in fact, shows that ASEAN has reached the point of its maturity for rule-based commitment.

The document serves in three ways, as the former ASEAN Secretary General, Mr. Ong Keng Yong said:

- “(1) formally accord ASEAN legal personality,
- (2) establish greater institutional accountability and compliance system, and
- (3) reinforce the perception of ASEAN as a serious regional player in the future of the Asia Pacific region.”<sup>399</sup>

One of the reasons why ASEAN finally agreed on the Charter, was growing number of overlapping, and perhaps even rival, regional initiatives of community creating. ASEAN so far played the leading role in the regional multilateral cooperation, but fading away with the lack of substance and concrete steps. Adoption of the Charter meant that *“for the first time after 40 years of regional organization, ASEAN Member states have codified organic Southeast Asian diplomacy, and listed key principles and purposes of ASEAN.”*<sup>400</sup>

The Charter re-stated the goal of creating ASEAN Comprehensive Community, based on three pillars: Economic Community, Political-Security Community and the Socio-Cultural Community. More importantly it pronounced the institutional changes in order to reach the goal of community creating, by setting concrete steps, such as holding ASEAN Summit twice a year, establishing the ASEAN Coordinating Council, appointing single chairmanship for key high - level ASEAN bodies and appointing Permanent Representative to ASEAN to form a Committee of Permanent Representation.

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<sup>399</sup> Following: Mely Caballero-Anthony, "The ASEAN Charter: An Opportunity Missed or One that Cannot be Missed?," *Journal of Southeast Asian Affairs* (2008). P. 76

<sup>400</sup> ASEAN Media Release, "ASEAN Leaders Sign ASEAN Charter," 2007.



The biggest attention was paid to the article 12 that stated the establishment of an ASEAN Human Rights Body. It came as a big surprise to the international society when the ASEAN Charter proclaimed that creating the new ASEAN Community goal is to “*strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, with due regard to the right and responsibilities*”<sup>401</sup> of the members. The Charter content was a big step forward towards institutionalization and legalization of the ASEAN. Declarations on democratic values and human rights used to be the issues upon which the member states could not reach consensus for a long time.<sup>402</sup>

Attention to the democratization, human rights and people is something new for ASEAN. However, it does not come from vacuum. This trend reflects the transformation of domestic changes in most of ASEAN member states. Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar, are in the forefront of the rapid democratization. The acceptance of certain issues in the discussion that are reflected in ASEAN’s recent declarations towards democratic values is a result of acceptance within the politics of the member states. This discussion links to the debate of norms and their diffusion from the chapter four. To understand the transformation of ASEAN foci, it is important to have the understanding of how methods and norms of ASEAN cooperation have evolved.

Inclusiveness of civil societies into the process of community building is new in ASEAN agenda as well and marks a significant change in ASEAN’s development. The Charter highlighted promotion of “*a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building*.”<sup>403</sup>

“[...] *the task of building the Community is not only the job of our governments: the governments alone cannot do it... There must be a sense of ownership, participation, and the awareness that we, as a collectivity of individuals, own the process and can shape this*

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<sup>401</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Charter." Preamble

<sup>402</sup> Tommy T. B. Koh et al., *The making of the ASEAN Charter* (Singapore ; Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Pub. Co., 2009).

<sup>403</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Charter." Art. 1 (13), Chapter I



*Community in our own image. We must strive to create a Community of caring and sharing societies, but without the participation of people, we will not make it.*"<sup>404</sup>

The very notion of 'people' and 'community' comprised of people and for people is newly embraced by ASEAN. Similar to the acceptance of the terms 'civil society' and 'participation' came after a long process in ASEM, which many of ASEAN countries in 1990s opposed to but learnt to accept later on. Interestingly, now ASEAN has come to the point of advocating civil society and participation in its development processes too.

Despite the milestones that the Charter has set, there remain challenges that the Charter has not been able to solve. In addition to competitiveness of multiple economic initiatives, as well as emerging new challenges from environmental, migration and other human security issues, ASEAN is urged to commit to more effective measures. The former Secretary General, Rodolfo C. Severino suggests:

*"Compliance and its culture would presuppose the recognition of the value of regional stability, integration and cooperation for national welfare. One thing is clear: Without a culture of compliance, ASEAN as a region would not only lack credibility in investor's eyes; it would not gain the other benefits of regionalism."*<sup>405</sup>

ASEAN has been caught up between the sentiment of tradition that defines its identity and pressure to meet current challenges determining its capacity and position. Moving towards developing compliance mechanism within ASEAN seems reasonable and expected. However, ASEAN Way contradicts the very idea of compliance. Would it be able to show flexibility, and reach consensus for enhancing its effectiveness and persuade the region about its relevance?

The problem with the consensus model in the ASEAN Way is that it is difficult for all to reach agreement; and even when so the agreement is diluted by the 'lowest common denominator' problem. However, the social pressure on actors to cooperate, "*a larger group*

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<sup>404</sup> H.E. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary General of ASEAN at that moment. Speech title: "*ASEAN and the Evolving Regional Architecture*", *The Eminent Persons Lecture Series by the Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.*

<sup>405</sup> Severino and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies., *ASEAN*. P. 105

*might be better since there are greater status rewards and punishments at stake for any particular actor.*"<sup>406</sup>

As Rodolfo Severino, the former Secretary General, stated the consensus methods of decision making and the non-interference principle, both lying at the foundation of the ASEAN Way, are the two major criticisms of ASEAN.<sup>407</sup> Voting is increasingly an option for ASEAN working methods. However, for the reason of "saving face", as he said, voting takes place behind the doors, and results are announced when the decision has been already made.

To sum up, the changes that have occurred within ASEAN since can be seen as a response to the changing environments on different levels of global, regional and national. Institutional innovations of ASEAN are a respond to the changing external environment 1991-2006. That has resulted in the Charter and the new focus of ASEAN with stronger emphasis on the institutional arrangements.

### **6.1.3. ASEAN and its "Way" as a socializing agent**

The ASEAN Way has been praised by the external observers as able connect Northeast Asia with India, and paly bridging role within the expanded East Asia Summit. Korean scholar Lee Sun-Jin noticed that the ASEAN Way successfully "*pull the region together and ASEAN has managed to maintain its integrity over the years.*"<sup>408</sup>

Earlier mentioned competition from other Asian actors in East Asian regional initiatives actually can be read as a success of ASEAN. It was able not only to engage those partners into the multilateral regional activities, but also to raise interest to the degree that they have taken their own initiative. In such a view, ASEAN can be seen as a norm entrepreneur that successfully communicated and made the partners buy-in to the concepts of region-building.

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<sup>406</sup> Acharya and Johnston, "Comparing regional institutions:an Introduction." P. 17

<sup>407</sup> Interview conducted on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009

<sup>408</sup> Lee Sun-Jin, "What I Have Always Wondered about ASEAN: A Perspective from ROK," in *ASEAN Matters! Reflecting on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, ed. Lee Yoong Yoong (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2011). P.230

ASEAN's inability to live up to its on-paper commitments has gained it a reputation of ineffective.<sup>409</sup> Instead of taking compliance actions, ASEAN's efforts have rested on the use of language and public pronouncements, particularly in the case of "modifying" Myanmar's behavior. In such context, ASEAN's socialization efforts resemble rhetorical action in which the very action of pronouncing leads to the change.

However, for ASEAN to become more effective there must be a break with the so-called 'ASEAN Ways'. This might come as impractical suggestion for ASEAN to pursue at this moment.

The effectiveness mentioned earlier also translates to the ability of ASEAN to act as a socialization agent. The commonly perceived as a failure case of ASEAN human rights is assessed as an efficacy of ASEAN to avoid international inquiries into human rights in the region. To the extreme, the criticisms have reached the point where ASEAN is seen as a façade and as 'imitation community'.<sup>410</sup> The problem with effectiveness of ASEAN lies in the incoherence of ASEAN's action. The creation of ASEAN Charter represents a move towards greater comfort with some degree of regional discussion on previously sensitive issues.

Discussion over the issues such as human rights does not, however, presuppose the way in which these issues could be addressed. A closer examination of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Terms of References (TOR) reveals that it has been intentionally vague. The parallel and contradictory commitments to '*constructive and non-confrontational approach*'<sup>411</sup> and at the same time, an affirmation of an intergovernmental and consultative role for the AICHR exemplify that.

However, the severe arguments about weakness of ASEAN are simultaneously correct and incomplete. According to the criticism, the Charter and the AICHR have not brought ASEAN any closer to the enforcement mechanisms.<sup>412</sup> From the proponents of ASEAN's efforts, however, the ASEAN's influence on Myanmar can be seen as a type of compliance mechanism

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<sup>409</sup> Davies, "The Perils of Incoherence: ASEAN, Myanmar and the Avoidable Failures of Human Rights Socialization?."

<sup>410</sup> Jones and Smith, "Making process, not progress: ASEAN and the evolving East Asian regional order."

<sup>411</sup> ASEAN, "AICHR Terms of Reference," ed. AICHR (Jakarta: ASEAN, 2009). Article 2.4

<sup>412</sup> James Munro, "The Relationship between the Origins and Regime Design of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 8 (2010). P. 8

compatible to ASEAN's nature and principles. Establishing the pressure of pronouncement of 'displeasure' can be understood as rhetorical action suggests ways in which ASEAN can improve its ability to influence Myanmar as well as others.<sup>413</sup>

Rhetorical action is an essential component of socialization process. Despite the common criticism of such organizations like ASEAN and ASEM that the commitments remain on the rhetorical sphere, I argue that it is actually the first step towards the change. The first stage of expressing a certain statement leads to the belief in it. Repetitive declarations lead to believing in the statement. Internalizing is the second stage. The final stage is action and behavior according to those rhetorical declarations.

Taking the analogy of ASEAN this research argues that ASEM follows similar logics and processes of socialization. It is interesting to observe the rhetoric of ASEAN officials and the faith and optimism that are always present.

*"We are connecting within ASEAN. Not only the decision making elites, but also the peoples. We have created the Masterplan of Connectivity, we have Blueprints to lead us to all pillar of a comprehensive Community. ASEAN is no longer purely governmental organization. It is for its people, it is centered around the peoples' needs."*<sup>414</sup>

On even more optimistic, or perhaps even arrogant, note, ASEAN has gained more confidence thanks to the fact that the US and the EU have recently signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Even more so now that the European Union is under the crisis. Everlasting comparison to the EU has been frustrating for ASEAN, which has always underlined it had never such plans to turn into an EU-like body. The EU has, nevertheless, been constantly posed as the role model of regionalism. With the crisis of European integration, ASEAN has gained confident in its own path of regionalism.

*"There is no need to learn from the European model, because we are different. The EU model will not suit us. ASEAN has its own way of engaging regional community. The EU model can never*

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<sup>413</sup> Davies, "The Perils of Incoherence: ASEAN, Myanmar and the Avoidable Failures of Human Rights Socialization?." P. 5

<sup>414</sup> Interview with an ASEAN official, June 2012, ASEAN Secretariat Jakarta, Indonesia. Answer to the question about the criticism of ASEAN elitism.

*work in Asia. The ASEAN Way has so far worked well. Look at East Asia now and at Asia before ASEAN.*”<sup>415</sup>

Another sharp-cut from the European style of integration has been given by the Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan: *“If there is a lesson learnt from the EU is not to have single currency”* - in response to the question on the learning from the EU. He underlines the diversity of the ASEAN region and the difference of the motivations and circumstances of European and Southeast regionalism. *“Europe is an inspiration, but not a model.”*<sup>416</sup>

Clearly, ASEAN has gained the confidence in its own path of regionalism, but to the degree of expecting other players to learn from its model in turn.

Let’s have a look how the changes within ASEAN reflect and affect the development of the Asia-Europe Meeting.

## 6.2. The changing ASEM

ASEM, originally intended to be the “Euro-Asian answer” to APEC, with a focus on economic issues. At the moment of establishment ASEM was anticipated to counter-balance APEC; to be of at least equal weight as to balance out the U.S. influence. Where it is today? What has it missed out that it has become a forum of more of social-diplomatic venue, than of real political significance? At what moment it has given up the potential it has and become only thinly interesting fatigue?

At the moment of inception, ASEM was expected to contribute to the consolidation of Asian identity; “regionalism through inter-regionalism” factor. Where is ASEM now in its identity politics? Does Asia still need ASEM to builds its regional “Asian” identity? What is ASEM identity itself in facing the enlargement of neither Asian nor European countries? Is it redefining itself?

Cognitive factors now apply not only to the actors involved but also the “**bridge**” itself.

<sup>415</sup> Interview, ASEAN Secretariat official, Jakarta, June 2012.

<sup>416</sup> Opening speech of Surin Pitsuwan, Australian National University, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012, Canberra, Australia.

This chapter addresses the changes and challenges of ASEM. It recognizes the increasingly pressing need for the organization to re-state its vision. Analysis followed by the assessment of this part helps to draw final conclusion and recommendation of the dissertation.

As it turned out, ‘political dialogue and cooperation on social/cultural issues’ have been especially important. Bart Gaens points out a “dialogue among cultures and civilisations” and an “interfaith dialogue” as keywords. In Gean’s view, a culturalist pre-supposition of distinct Asian and Western cultures has been at the root of ASEM’ inevitably promotes the idea of an ‘Asia’ community transcending the highly complex Asian region.<sup>417</sup>

Bart Gaens claims that interregionalism remains a vital element in structuring multilateral relations. Interregionalism is logically the result of regionalism and proliferation of regional organisations that interact with each other. A first generation of regionalism was mainly trade-oriented and exemplified by the European Economic Community (EEC). A newer type of regionalism is more complex, comprehensive and political than previously, and has developed into third-generation regionalism in which regions become more proactive, engages in interregional arrangements and aim to shape global governance.<sup>418</sup>

I, however, argue, that at this moment, it is the diverting attitudes towards institutionalization that hampers further development of the organization. The challenge for ASEM at the moment is to re-define its identity. At the founding stage it claimed to be the bridge between the regions. With extending memberships and shifting regional frameworks, the position of ASEM as a bridge also goes under alteration. **The purpose of ASEM has changed as the interests of members have changed.**

### 6.2.1. The issue of enlargement: ASEM’s identity crisis

The enlargement of ASEM, like enlargement of ASEAN and EU internally, has cause long-term challenges for intra-regional management, as well as inter-regional relations. At the

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<sup>417</sup> Geans, *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*. P. 95-99

<sup>418</sup> Bart Gaens, Juha Jokela, and Mikael Mattlin, "The Eu's Asia: Renegotiating boundaries, renegotiating norms," *Asia Europe Journal* 10(2012). P. 95



forming phase, ASEM was a dialogue between Europe, represented by the EU, and Asia, represented by the Southeast Asian partners (ASEAN) and three Northeast Asian states (China, Japan, and South Korea), basically the ASEAN Plus Three. Already with inclusion of Indochinese partners (Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia) into ASEAN, the fragile inter-regional relationship got shaky. Particularly, the European partners were not happy with Myanmar's accession to the process. Initial "rebel" from EU and demonstration of its disapproval slowly was replaced by passive acceptance. Moreover, the involvement of Myanmar in the process has been more than problematic, causing tensions and even unwillingness from some (European) members to further engage in the process. This "fuzziness" of Asia as a region is reflected in inability to set clear priorities on actions in and amongst sub-regions within.

ASEM later expanded to South Asia, to include India, Pakistan, and later also Mongolia. While the expansion reflected the inclusiveness of ASEM framework on one hand; on the other hand it raised question about the criteria for ASEM partnership and the definitions of "Asia" and "Europe" in this process. Particularly, the "Asian" part has become controversial when it comes to the issue of regional identity. The most recent enlargement that included Australia, New Zealand and Russia into ASEM, not only raised question about new members' regional identification, but also the very identity of the organization itself. This refers to the question to what is understood as a region elaborated in chapter one of the literature review.

The issue of membership also poses question to the organization's operation. From the European side, the participation of non-EU members Switzerland, Norway and the East European have been raised. On the Asian side, the membership scope is even more problematic. With inclusion of basically ASEAN Plus Three countries, India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and most recently Australia, New Zealand and Russia, with different levels of engagement, the question being asked from the European side is: "*With which Asia should Europe dialogue?*"<sup>419</sup>

That brings further question on the non-EU member's European countries interested in the participation (Switzerland, Norway, even Turkey). When in ASEM 9 Switzerland and Norway accessed as non-EU European members, the remaining question is not only how "Asia"

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<sup>419</sup> Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Assymetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism." P.12



is defined, but also how “Europe” now should be perceived. Additionally, the EU expects that ASEM is automatically open to its new members (Romania, Bulgaria etc.) Sceptical observers are concerned with cohesion of growing ASEM, warning that diluted process – not only in terms of content, but also in terms of scope – as it would be more difficult to have consensus on common interests, would lead to stagnation of the whole process.

Table 17: Phases of ASEM enlargement

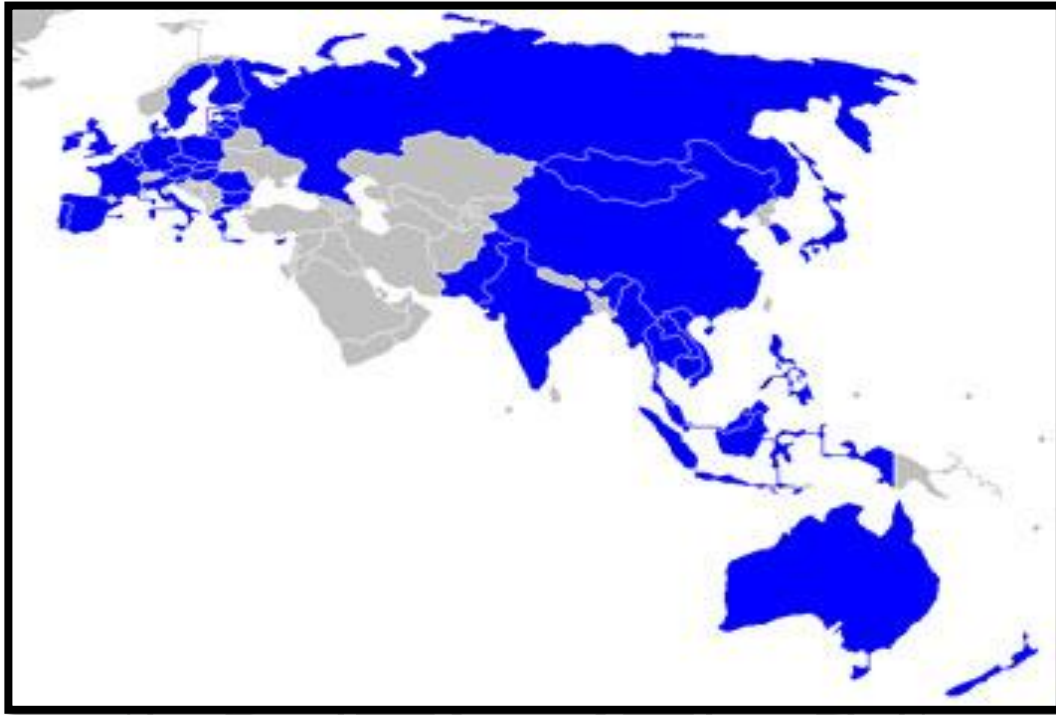
ASEM Asian Partners					ASEM European Partners				
Foundaing partners 1996	Enlargement I 2004	Enlargement II 2008	Enlargement III 2010	Enlargement IV 2012	Foundaing partners 1996	Enlargement I 2004	Enlargement II 2008	Enlargment IV 2010	Enlargement IV 2012
Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	India	Australia	Bangladesh	Austria	Cyprus	Bulgaria	Russia	Norway - non EU
China	Laos	Mongolia	New Zealand		Belgium	Czech Republic	Romania		Switzerland - non EU
Indonesia	Myanmar	Pakistan			Denmark	Estonia			
Japan		ASEAN Secretariat*			European Commission*	Hungary			
Malaysia					Finland	Latvia			
Philippines					France	Lithuania			
Singapore					Germany	Malta			
South Korea					Greece	Poland			
Thailand					Ireland	Slovakia			
Vietnam					Italy	Slovenia			
					Luxemburg				
					Netherlands				
					Portugal				
					Spain				
					Swede				
					United Kingdom				
total	10	3	3	2	15	10	2	1	2

Source: Author's compilation

The successive enlargement not only poses challenges to the organization in terms of coherence but also inflicts the changing definitions and the scope of “Asia” and “Europe.” This shall be discussed in the chapter six which addresses the changes and transformation of ASEM and ASEAN in the context of changing regions. Moreover, there is a common concern within the organization is that it keeps going broader but shallower. A member state official involved in the management of ASEM complained:

*“The scope of members keeps growing. The expectations are higher too. But the available funding and commitment become more limited.”<sup>420</sup>*

Map of ASEM members: the world of regions



Source: ASEM Infoboard

With such a broad membership, there appears also a fear of ASEM transforming into “UN-type” of organization without geographical limitations. Does ASEM has an identity? The wide range of topics addressed within ASEM meetings can bring a concern about ASEM’s personality. Despite such a broad scope of members, ASEM is not mentioned in the International Institutional Law textbook.<sup>421</sup>

*“This is rather not an option for ASEM to turn much bigger than it already is. The problem is how to manage such broad organization.”<sup>422</sup>*

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<sup>420</sup> Interview, Singapore, June 2012.

<sup>421</sup> Voicu, "Asia and Europe: In search of a New Partnership." P. 11

<sup>422</sup> Interview, Singapore, June 2012.

In the earlier literature review chapter I talked about the concepts of building a region and how inter-regionalism processes can contribute to defining regions. This part links to that discourse and addresses specifically how ASEM has contributed to defining what is understood as Asia and what is understood as Europe.

The concepts of Asia continue to be fluid. Asia is no longer a geographical concept. *“It is a political commonplace, used as a strong and positively loaded linguistic asset in political rhetoric in the Asia Pacific area for various kinds of regional integrative purposes.”*<sup>423</sup>

With predominantly rising importance of Asia in all aspects, analysis of changes in the understanding of Asia needs to include the references to the significant Other - Europe.

*“The argument that Asia is a continuously widening and deepening integrative process without outer boundaries is in itself plausible, but what is interesting is that this process is being set in contrast to Europe. In other words, a dichotomy is created with Asia and Europe as opposing poles, with the implication that Europe is the internally homogenizing boundary builder against external areas.”*<sup>424</sup>

Asia nowadays has turned into the global political and economic core area where important states want to be present. *“The maps of Asia will continue to be drawn and redrawn for centuries still.”*<sup>425</sup> If there is any consensus on the definition of Asia, then it would be that the definition is under constant change.

*“Asia’ region is defined on the basis of political realities, rather than geography”*<sup>426</sup> said Jusuf Wanandi. The attention to Asia is not only directed by the focus of this dissertation. *“Asian nations are now significant politically and strategically. European-derived institutions and systems and English-language remain dominant in the structure of governments, information,*

<sup>423</sup> Pekka Korhonen, "Changing Definitions of Asia," *Asia Europe Journal* 10(2012). P. 99

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. P. 101

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. P. 110

<sup>426</sup> Jusuf Wanandi, *Global, Regional and National: Strategic Issues and Linkages* (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2006). P. 46

*educations, religion, philosophy, culture, values and beliefs, but are being eroded by Asian alternatives that seem certain to expand.*<sup>427</sup>

Looking at the political map of ASEM, it seems that not only Asia is a matter of evolution. Participation of the European countries outside of the EU frame has signaled also that political participation draw countries on the regional map.

### **6.2.2. ASEM - From a problem-solving institution to non-solving problematic institution?**

Taking up Robert Cox's idea<sup>428</sup>, Paul Cammack looked at ASEM of a "problem-solving" institution in a context of conjunctural and structural imperatives of global capitalism.<sup>429</sup> Cox had a managerial perspective, in which he saw "problem solving institutions" as seeking to manage the system without inquiring too deeply into its origins, its internal tensions, or the inequalities which it creates and perpetuates.

The problem-solving theory, according to Cox, who takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action. The general aim of problem-solving is to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble. Since the general pattern of institutions and relationships is not called into question, particular problems can be considered in relation to the specialized areas of activity in which they arise.<sup>430</sup>

Following Paul Cammack's argumentation, this study discusses further the role of ASEM in the context of multilateralist agenda. The first evaluation from this point of view is that ASEM could not be a successful problem-solving institution because from the beginning it has been

<sup>427</sup> Ron Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West* (Fiji: IPS Publications, University of the South Pacific, 2007). P. 6

<sup>428</sup> Robert Cox, *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order* (New York: United Nations University Press, 1997).

<sup>429</sup> Paul Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>430</sup> Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory?," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). P. 208

caught in the multiple contradictory in many ways demands. As shown in the earlier section, the expectations of the actors involved are rather divergent than convergent. Trying to accommodate all and adding on agenda has made the organization pursue multiplicity of goals. Therefore, it did not fulfill the role of problem-solving institution.

In this context, ASEM's difficulties lie in the following aspects:

1. Multiple contradictory demands. Multicity of goals challenges the organization's vision and objectives. In fact, lack of clear vision and clear objectives' strategy leads to dispersing focus, and "widening instead of deepening the cooperation." Both aim and agenda of ASEM are dispersed.
2. While it suggested to be a forum between regions, "it is increasingly utilized within each region as an auxiliary means of imposing – developing and reinforcing – the local hegemony of capital."<sup>431</sup>

*"The ASEM process should not be seen as only promoting cooperation between regions – it is also used by states as a means of furthering the restructuring of their own societies. Asian leaders use the institutional dialogue to enforce the disciplines of neo-liberalism in their own societies, while European leaders employ their own version of the 'Asian model' to urge the need for modifications in the behaviour and expectations of their own workers and citizens."*<sup>432</sup>

This confirms the argument that socialization can lead to the change of states behaviours.

In search for the support of bottom-up process to the multilateralism mechanisms, I can refer to Robert Cox is one of the proponents of new multilateralism. New multilateralism he defined as a consequence of post-hegemonic plurality. *"New multilateralism built from bottom-up on the foundation of a broadly participative global society."*<sup>433</sup> Linking the two approaches mentioned, ASEM can be seen as a new form of multilateralism that is strong on the bottom-up, but not as a problem-solving institution.

<sup>431</sup> Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism." P. 14

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. P. 14 - 15

<sup>433</sup> Cox, *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order*. P. Vii

ASEM as a form of interregional and multilateral cooperation reflect domestic strategies of states as well as their regional and global agendas. The solutions that ASEM provides are provisional, fragmented, contradictory and crisis-prone. They provide space for counter-hegemonic movements.<sup>434</sup>

Ruland came to conclusion that ASEM (and other inter- transregional dialogues) certainly have the potential to serve as *“nodal points of an evolving system of global governance, key players in the Triad are so far reluctant to utilize them. Deeply-seated cultural and historical Asian aversion to institutionalization of international relations, American unilateralism and the ramifications of the anti-terrorism war are major impediments to further institutional maturing of inter- and transregional fora.”*<sup>435</sup>

### 6.2.3. Challenges for inter-regionalism

The problem ASEM faces relates to the general problem that inter-regionalism as such face. To see the effectiveness of ASEM, one needs to ask what are the content of inter-regional cooperation, what it is about indeed? The indication of region openness and global openness notes the possibility that consequence of assertive regionalism could be the separation of the global economy into competing blocks.<sup>436</sup>

ASEM builds upon the existing bilateral and regional relations, and reinforce or facilitate multilateral initiatives. But to place interregional initiatives between bilateral, regional and multilateral levels of interaction between states is immediately to draw attention to the fact that they are potentially as much ‘problem-making’ as ‘problem-solving’.

*“ASEM constitutes an institutional response to the relatively under-developed state of economic relations between Asia and Europe. In turn, the institutional development secured through ASEM enables East Asia to play an enhanced role in the management of the global order. Once constituted, ASEM can promote the exchange of information and the creation of communicative networks, present Asia to Europe and the United States as a partner rather than*

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<sup>434</sup> Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism." P. 25

<sup>435</sup> Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

<sup>436</sup> Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism." P. 25-26



*a rival, facilitate mutual learning, and generally support and advance continued liberalization in the global economy.*”<sup>437</sup>

In 1996 at the establishing point, ASEM had 26 members. It keeps growing, today with 51 members. This expansion, surely has been criticized as horizontal (broadening) but not vertical (deepening).

*“The establishment of Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) cannot be considered as a political or diplomatic surprise. The names of Asia and Europe are inseparable in the universal history of human civilization.”*<sup>438</sup>

*“Both Asia and Europe are facing the urgent task of maintaining world peace and stability, promoting economic development and social progress through dialogue and cooperation.”*<sup>439</sup>

Voicu in his article is looking for common goals of Asia and Europe partnership. He follows Encyclopaedia Britannica’s definition of partnership as *“a voluntary association of two or more persons for the purpose of managing a business enterprise and sharing its profits or losses.”* He does not make deeper discussion on the partnership in international relations context. Nevertheless, he looks at ASEM as a form of partnership by the token of partnership as an aggregation of persons doing business under a common name and not as legal entity separate and apart from its stakeholders.

ASEM hence, has proved to be an instrument for enhancing economic development of the two continents, contributing to maintaining the regional and world peace and stability, and also promoting multi-polarization and unity in diversity.

The partnership in the case of ASEM has various level of success, as it appears that the interests of members differ. While European members tried to increase the political dialogue within ASEM forum, the Asian participants are more focused on trade. Europe also has different interests in engaging with Asian partners – making Asia less Sino-centric, as well as refurbish relations with India and ASEAN.

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid. P. 26 following Christopher Dent 1997

<sup>438</sup> Voicu, "Asia and Europe: In search of a New Partnership." P. 2

<sup>439</sup> Ibid. P. 2



In the whole picture of ASEM relations, the ASEAN-EU ties are the most prominent. ASEAN's development over the last few years has drawn even stronger attention from the European partners. ASEAN's centrality and the leading role in the Asian regional architecture, has brought the Association to the position of EU's main interest group in terms of security cooperation in Asia-Pacific region.

The prevalence of criticism over ASEM leads to another question: Is this the crisis of multilateralism? Despite the fact that all leaders are declaring the importance and commitment to multilateralism it seems that bilateralism still is a preferred method of working.

It requires less negotiating, learning and adjusting efforts than in the multilateral setting. Particularly when the member states have such diverse motivations and interests towards extra-regional cooperation. ASEM is a by-product of tension between multilateralism and regionalism.<sup>440</sup>

"In many ways the dysfunctionality of the ASEM is a consequence of a sub-optimal framework that lacks a core agreement about what the objectives are."<sup>441</sup> On one hand, the EU sees the ASEM as a means for further regulation in an institutionalized framework for its relations with the region. On the other hand, Asian members view the ASEM as a way to further promote and coordinate their economic interests by sticking to the doctrine of 'non-interference' when it comes to cases of political decisions.<sup>442</sup>

Despite that, ASEM can still result in a 'common place' between the two regions when the concept of integration is examined. Reiterer said "as an open dialogue process stressing the equality of participants ASEM could contribute to bridging the gap between the two concepts of integration: the European value law and institution based and the Asian one with its statist preoccupation with sovereignty, functionalism and consensus (ASEAN Way)"<sup>443</sup>

On the appraisal note, ASEM has developed beyond intra-governmental forums. In the forums conducted to prepare the ASEM 4 in 2002, ASEM started to include representatives of

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<sup>440</sup> Park, "ASEM and the Future of Asia-Europe Relations: Background, Characteristics and Challenges."

<sup>441</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 799

<sup>442</sup> Athanasios Lakrintis, "Regional Identity Formation in Southeast Asia and the Role of the European Union," *Working Paper, Centre for European Governance (KEDIA)* 01(2011).

<sup>443</sup> Michael Reiterer, "Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Fostering a Multipolar World Order through Inter-regional Cooperation," *Asia Europe Journal* 7(2009).

civil society. Hence, in terms of actors, ASEM has worked as a mechanism within three concerted channels of interaction: G2G, (first track); business communities (second track) and NGO, civil society and P2P as third track. First track is managed by the official meetings. The second and third are managed by ASEF.

ASEM is unique on two levels:

1. It joins not only diverse regions but also diverse forms of regionalisms and regionalization;
2. The commonality is that out of diverse member states, they both have different interests.

However, ASEM needs crystallization of “ASEM spirit” in order to consolidate its unique position on the diplomatic arena.

This might lead to the suggestion that inter-regionalism is passé. ASEM’s inter-regionalism trial period did not prove well. The gradual shift towards inter-governmentalism is more apparent in recent years. Moving away from initial inter-regionalism promoted by the EU towards more ASEAN-model of cooperation, inter-governmentalism, suggests a certain shift too. One can conclude that mean that the EU’s vision did not work and hence, there is a will of trying something that is working, in specific the ASEAN inter-regionalism. Another interpretation is that the proactive the EU has given up the questionable leadership over ASEM, and hence it fell into the strengthening ASEAN. Either of those doubts cannot deny the contribution that ASEM has brought so far:

*“Compared with two decades ago, or even ten years ago, today European-Asian relations are fairly institutionalized. The ‘third’ link of the international order is not comparable to highly formalized transatlantic relations but has come close to match transpacific links.”<sup>444</sup>*

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<sup>444</sup>Dosch, "Europe and the Asia-Pacific." P. 110

#### **6.2.4. Change of interests: Members' commitments**

In terms of hosting meetings, ASEAN had an honor of inauguration the ASEM in Bangkok 1996. One of the principles of ASEM is to keep the balance between Asian and European countries in terms of hosting Summits as well. Of 9 Summits so far, 3 of them were hosted in ASEAN countries (Bangkok, Hanoi and Vientiane), 4 in the EU capitals (London, Copenhagen, Helsinki, and Brussels) and the remaining two were in Seoul and Beijing.

The habit of including the list of thematic initiatives and offers to host meetings to the Chair's Statements started in ASEM7 in 2008 in Beijing. Statistical summary can reveal the interest and commitment of certain members over the other.

From the ASEM7 Annex List of new initiatives, only certain countries came up with proposals of new issues to tackle. Vietnam proposed 3 (only China proposed more – 4, other initiators suggested one idea each). Those included Enhancing ASEM Visibility through Cultural activities; Workshop on Sharing Experiences on Preparedness to Response to Global Climate Change and Emerging Diseases, and ASEM Forum on Food Security.<sup>445</sup>

2008 of 33 activities 11 were hosted by ASEAN countries (three of which were hosted by Vietnam) and 9 were hosted by EU. It was the year of China hosting the Summit, hence it was particularly active and hosted 7 other meetings the same year.

2009 out of 33 events planned, again 11 were hosted by ASEAN (five of which took place in Vietnam), and 12 by the EU countries (including Romania) and 4 by China.<sup>446</sup>

Outcomes of the following Summit showed that China and South Korea suggested each 4 new initiatives, and Vietnam two. This time evidently the initiative was on the Asian side of members, as from the European side only Austria, Belgium and Czech Republic came up with one proposal each, whereas 7 Asian countries (5 ASEAN) had some new ideas of collaboration.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Annex I, ASEM, "Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting."

<sup>446</sup> Annex II, *ibid*.

<sup>447</sup> Annex I, ASEM, "Chair's Statement of the Eight Asia-Europe Meeting," (Brussels2010).

2010 had all activities with 53 in total meetings. 13 of which were hosted by ASEAN countries (7 of which were in Vietnam), EU hosted a record number of 33 meetings, in which Brussels- the host of ASEM Summit<sup>8</sup> hosted 22 other meetings, and only 1 in China.

2011 had only 19 meetings in total, 8 of which were in ASEAN countries (2 in Vietnam), 5 were held in the EU and 4 in China.<sup>448</sup>

ASEM9 Summit came up with new order of report which shows a new tendency of cooperation. Instead of country-based initiatives, there are now issue-based initiatives, under which several countries can sign up. It can be still observed that some are more proactive than others.

2012 had in total 32 meetings, with first time where China held none of them. 23 were held by ASEAN countries, with majority of Laos – the host of ASEM9, and only 7 of EU.

2013 scheduled 6 meetings with 4 in ASEAN countries (2 of them in Vietnam) and the rest two in Japan and India. The EU showed no presence in this planning.<sup>449</sup> Out of 7 collaboration projects, Vietnam signed for two. ASEAN countries in total signed for three, and China for 3 as well. The EU was less active, with only Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, EC, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland supporting three initiatives for 2013.

Table 18: Statistical summary of Members hosting ASEM meetings

Year	Total	ASEAN countries	EU countries	China
2008	33	11 (3 of which was Vietnam)	9	7
2009	33	11 (5 in Vietnam)	12 (including Romania)	4
2010	53	13 (7 in Vietnam)	33 (22 in	1

<sup>448</sup> Annex II, *ibid.*

<sup>449</sup> Annex II, ASEM, "Chair's Statement of the 9th ASEM Summit."

			Brussels)	
<b>2011</b>	19	8 (2 in Vietnam)	5	4
<b>2012</b>	32	23 (9 in Laos, 1 Vietnam)	7	0
<b>2013</b>	6 scheduled	4 (2 in Vietnam)	0	0

Source: Author's analysis following the data from the Official ASEM Chair's Statements

The proactivity of the certain members, China and Vietnam particular can show what interests the members in the ASEM process. For Vietnam, it is the opportunity of multilateral diplomacy in the low cost setting. For small and medium countries, ASEM and its benevolent environment of mutual learning and exchanging knowledge offer only benefits.

For another small country, like Laos, participation in ASEM has proved beneficial on the diplomatic level leading to business and travel boost. The ASEM9 Summit was held in Vientiane in November 2012, creating for the country a major international exposure. For Laos it was the first time that it has held such a high level meeting with such a wide range of participants. The membership in ASEM worked for the self-promotion for Laos on the costs that it was able to handle.

China also sees the perspective of taking the lead, where there is a vacuum of leadership. PRC knows that strong presence in ASEM only reconfirms China's position in European's eyes. It is now also in the position to take heavier burden in terms of financial contribution and it is willing to unlike many other Asian members. In fact, with newly appointed Director General of ASEF, a diplomat from China, makes Beijing paying more attention to the Asia-Europe exchanges. Moreover, it is the one that actively advocates for establishing a secretariat for ASEM.

*“China is one of strongest proponent for ASEM to establish a secretariat. And it wants ASEF to play that role.”*<sup>450</sup>

<sup>450</sup> Interview with European Commission External Action Services official, Kuala Lumpur, June 2013.

### 6.3.5. Changes from “below”

The previous chapter has shown the contribution of civil society participation to the ASEM process. The significance of the politics “from below” for current efforts to institutionalize inter-regional cooperation through ASEM is unquestionable.

ASEM is in the process of moving from its elitist format to more participatory one, allowing not only smoother horizontal dialogue among the members, but also vertical dialogue among the governmental representations and civil societies. Non-state actors have become progressively more involved in the politics of inter-regional relations in a form of “participatory democracy”<sup>451</sup>. By including people’s representatives, the dialogue becomes democratized and ASEM shifts towards a more comprehensive platform engaging top-down and bottom-up processes of interaction. This trend of democratization Asian-European dialogue in many ways is the contribution of Asia-Europe Foundation’s initiatives which are responsible for engagement of people’s participation in inter-regional process.

The proliferation of non-state actors and emergence of new capacities for associational life and of a political discourse articulated through notions of “public participation”, political reform and accountability are evidence of rising expectations of a genuine democratic challenge to the powers of the state.<sup>452</sup> *“Civil society is regarded as ‘capable of representing the interests of citizens on the political arena, limiting the power of social oligarchies and making democratic institutions serve the broader sections of the population’”*.<sup>453</sup>

*“ASEM started out as a highly exclusive dialogue forum of an informal nature. The ASEM summits were seen as high-level gatherings bringing together Heads of States or Government, at the apex of a top-down process. Civil society is confined to the ASEF’s activities in the third pillar of social, cultural and educational activities.”*<sup>454</sup>

ASEM6 resulted in Helsinki Declaration emphasizing the civil society’s role in promoting ASEM ownership and visibility, both concepts closely related to legitimacy. ASEM6 can

<sup>451</sup> Bersick, ““The democratization of inter- and transregional dialogues: the role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments”,” P. 263

<sup>452</sup> Richards, “Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition.” P. 147

<sup>453</sup> Following Luckham and While 1996.Ibid. P. 147

<sup>454</sup> Jokela and Gaens, “Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM.” P. 155

therefore be seen as a signpost of the increased recognition of civil society as a contributing actor.<sup>455</sup> This positive development continued at 2010 Summit in Brussels, where the Chairman's statement mentioned:

*"(...)civil society's role in the social dialogue (involving governments and social partners), human rights promotion, environmental protection, cultural heritage, and people-to-people contacts: moreover, it affirmed that the People's Forum plays a valuable role in reaching ASEM's objectives."*<sup>456</sup>

The international organizations are the manifestation of internationalism, and transnational and global democratisation is an extension and universalisation of democracy.<sup>457</sup> Such movements are said to challenge the state-centered multilateralism through the reconstruction of civil societies and political authorities on a global scale, 'building a system of global governance from the bottom up. As a result, new forms of 'complex multilateralism' are appearing.<sup>458</sup>

Centrality, the business involvement in ASEM process - AEBF reflects the political sophistication of large firms in constructing policy channels to the ASEM process, notably in 'business dialogue' with its Economic Ministers.

ASEM can take up the role as an enforcer of global competitive conditions in the domestic and regional economies.<sup>459</sup>

The ASEF was launched as the 'fourth pillar' representing the 'engagement of the civil societies of the two regions' in order to "bring life the vision of Asia-Europe cooperation as seen by the ASEM leaders".<sup>460</sup> ASEF's fourth pillar creates a modus vivendi for business and the media and a clearing house for various civic organizations, think-tanks and research institutes

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid. P. 156

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. P. 156

<sup>457</sup> Following Sakamoto 1997: 208. Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition." P. 149

<sup>458</sup> Nicholas O'Brien, "ASEM: Moving from an economic to a political dialogue?," *EIAS Briefing Papers* BP01/02(2001).; Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition." P. 150

<sup>459</sup> Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below? Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition." P. 153

<sup>460</sup> Ibid. P. 153



supply the necessary expert comments, and the Vision Group lends prestige and grandeur to the whole project.<sup>461</sup>

### **6.3. Changes as an effect of socialization**

#### **6.3.1. The role of dialogue mechanism**

Lost in translations or expectation gap? As a bridge between the civilizations, ASEM, and ASEF in particular, not only build a dialogue between Asia and Europe as civilizations, but dialogue of civilizations between governments and civil society.

Seventeen years from the start, culture dialogue, mutual perception and “crash of civilization” are understood differently. The mission for ASEF is different as well. Not to bridge the differences among the civilizations. Not working in East-West dialectics anymore, but is rather now working on common, global issues. Cooperation, rather than just dialogue. No binary, more equal participation.

Jurgen Habermas made distinction between: (1) dialogue as a strategic means and (2) dialogue as a communicative process. In the first role, dialogue is to influence the behaviour of another by means of threat of sanctions or the prospect of gratification. In the second role dialogue as a communication aims at reaching mutual understanding and consensus among the parties. Habermas considered communication as aiming at obtaining consent for a decision, not at a decision brought about by strategic compromise.

Some have included dialogue into international cooperation, which most evident is the famous “ASEAN Way”, which is characterized by communication and consultation. ASEAN consensus has become almost interchangeable with dialogue habit. Some have criticized this style as “talk-shop”, but indeed, the consultations are ongoing process orientation, rather than immediate solution finding. Of course, at the end target of such consultations, meetings, and dialoguing is to come up with solutions. However, it takes a longer and slower process for building up the level of trust and friendship.

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. P. 154

In the case of ASEAN constructive norms create the “*Dialogue as constructive norm is inherently inclusive, purposeful, and prescriptive.*”<sup>462</sup>

Social constructivism in applying to Southeast Asia shows that regions are to be seen from norms and collective identities that have been constructed by interaction in the region (interactive norms), brought in from the outside and have been successfully localized (external norms) or are the result of the redefinition of identity because of internal change of an actor (internal/domestic norms).<sup>463</sup>

Christopher Dent talked about macro-networking and micro-networking in analysing ASEM inter-regional diplomacy. Socializing process between and among Europeans and East Asians builds essential ties and functions in the processes of regionalism.

“*ASEM is just a forum and cannot distance from its members/partners to become a normative mechanism. Yet, ASEM’s memory should be revisited.*”<sup>464</sup>

Communication that includes “agreeing to disagree” is important.<sup>465</sup> In ASEM’s early years, the EU has utilised the forum to show its emphasis on dialogue rather than confrontation and sanctions, by adopting an initially German-French strategy of problem-solving behind closed doors.<sup>466</sup> This is of high resemblance of informal negotiation style of ASEAN Way of consultations.

Critically speaking, the EU has furthermore pursued a policy of ‘strategic adaptation’ in order to adjust to Asian interests.<sup>467</sup> Sensitive issues of human rights were addressed in information seminars organized by ASEF. “*This consensus-building process may indicate the road ahead in the lights of the EU’s weakened profile as a normative power.*”<sup>468</sup>

<sup>462</sup> Kim Hyung Jong; Lee Poh Ping, "The Changing Role of Dialogue in the International Relations of Southeast Asia," *Asian Survey* 51, no. 5 (2011).

<sup>463</sup> Rother, "Wendt meets East: ASEAN cultures of conflict and cooperation." P. 57

<sup>464</sup> Voicu, "Asia and Europe: In search of a New Partnership." P. 17

<sup>465</sup> Risse, "Let's Argue! Rhetorical Action in World Politics."; Maria-Gabriela Manea, "Human rights and the interregional dialogue between Asia and Europe: ASEAN-EU relations and ASEM," *Pacific Review* 21, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>466</sup> Gaens, "ASEM as a Tool to "Bridge the Cultural Divide"." P. 69

<sup>467</sup> Manea, "Human rights and the interregional dialogue between Asia and Europe: ASEAN-EU relations and ASEM." P. 380-381

<sup>468</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 161

However, constructively speaking, this reflects the ability of the EU to learn and adjust to the partner. It can be read as an outcome of socialization and mutual learning.

Performance of regional actors is shaped by the institutional set-up as well as by the political will of its member states. On the EU perspective, ASEM provided the EU with a testing ground to support ‘European’ values and principles, including the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights.

*“The EU’s behaviour and normative ambitions are modified through interaction with Asian states in an institution such as ASEM. These elements are closely related to identity, the third yardstick for legitimacy.”*<sup>469</sup>

In this light, ASEM is a perfect medium for sending political signals and for the concerting efforts’ whose results were settled through bilateral contacts. What cannot be solved at bilateral level may be perceived differently at regional level and perhaps could be answered in an inter-regional forum.<sup>470</sup>

### 6.3.2. Functionality of ASEM process

Regardless of performance, shortcomings and criticism, there are three functions of ASEM that are to be acknowledged:

1. Collective identity building: Self-Other grouping and the issue of representation  
Encounter: representation, image, “outer coherence” for public to present to the “Other”;
2. Internationalization (SEA) another platform important socio-cultural intra-SEA interaction; internally, cooperation, functional interaction, exchange;
3. The flow of values: summitry for transforming ideas about identity and collective action.
4. Civil society knowledge sharing – prototype of epistemic community

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. P. 157

<sup>470</sup> Micheal Reiterer, "Interregionalsim as New Diplomatic Tool: the EU and East Asia," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11(2006).

The often marginalized third pillar, in fact contributes a significant milestone in the Asia-Europe and ASEAN-EU relations. The ASEM process, as well as ASEAN-EU meetings, has been described as “*relationship below its potential*”<sup>471</sup>. One of the main deadlocks recognized is the elitist format; too centralised and dominated by Government-to-Government relations.

With little space for civil society participation in the official, the third pillar has become the venue as well as the integrator between the governmental and civil levels. The socio-cultural cooperation and its coordination by ASEF have been pivotal in revitalising the ASEAN-EU relationship as well as adding validity and relevance to the ASEM process.

The inclusion of civil society actors has been recognized, yet, still in a very fuzzy way, serving rather as recommendation, and important factor to strengthen the two regions’ relations. During the Conference on “Changes in Southeast Asia and its Impact on EU-ASEAN Relations”, Miguel Neves named three factors that might bring the regions closer to each other.

The first one is the cooperation in non-traditional security sphere, particularly on the anti-terrorism, sea piracy, and human trafficking issues. The second opportunity is the strategy for deeper integration processes, where EU could serve as a model for ASEAN to consider. The third one is the development of para-diplomacy between sub-national governments of the EU and ASEAN. By that he stresses the importance of “low politics” of economic and socio-cultural areas, where civil society has more active participation in the process of bilateral inter-regional relations<sup>472</sup>.

The contribution from the third pillar activities and actors adds value and validity to ASEM process. It also reinvigorates ASEAN-EU relationship by decentralizing it from the governmental elitism. To categorize the role of the third pillar of Asia-Europe inter-regional cooperation, the following three functions prevail:

1. Socialization: The process of learning about partner and oneself, which in the context of Asia-Europe negotiation would be insurmountable without deeper understanding of actors

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<sup>471</sup> Miguel Santo Neves, "Changes in Southeast Asia and its Impact on EU-ASEAN Relations," (Lison2004).

<sup>472</sup> *ibid.* P.18

involved. The socialization is accompanied also by intentional and un-intentional identity formation in the process of interaction between the Self and the Other. This function is particularly important for ASEAN members in the cultural cooperation sphere. Within Asia in general, and Southeast Asia in particular, there are limited number of cultural cooperation platforms and networks.

Apart from the ASEAN Foundation, and online portals like Youth@ASEAN, ASEAN Cultural and Information Portal, there are not many arrangements for the peoples of ten member countries to interact, cooperate and integrate. ASEF and its activities not only provide a chance for ASEAN to meet European counterparts, other Asian partners, but also their associate ASEAN fellows. Moreover, in the context of such groupings, often the Southeast Asian find the bond and the feeling of connection or shared “origin” in the comparison to other Asian or European participants involved. This is seen as a result of Self-Other reflection of collective identity building. This type of socialization can contribute to ASEAN we-feeling and community awareness.

2. Innovation of agenda-setting: In ASEM case, refers to introducing new directions of cooperation, organize new norms and policies – democratization, Human Rights, civil society, participatory and cultural democracy. This function is connected to the interaction and value transfer described in previous section. Interaction involves communication, and in many ways, transition of ideas and values, which also could be seen as “compromise” between ASEAN values (ASEAN Way adopted by ASEM operation style) with certain “European” agenda, such as human rights, or cultural cooperation.

3. Knowledge transfer, knowledge produce: incorporates policy network creation, experience sharing, and emergence of the epistemic community.<sup>473</sup> ASEF, through its Intellectual Exchange activities, has establishes a global epistemic community network through sustainable dialogues and knowledge sharing platforms. Involving academicians, policy-makers, intellectuals, the youth (future decision-makers) into lasting exchanges, they create a channel of

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<sup>473</sup> Katja Freistein, "Beyond the Taboos? The opportunities and limitations of Asian-European track-two dialogue," in *Asian-European Relations: Building Blocks of Global Governance?*, ed. Gunter Schubert Jurgen Ruland, Gunter Schucher and Cornelia Storz (New York: Routledge Taylor& Francis Group, 2008). P.227-228

information and understanding, significantly influencing the future route of region-to-region relations.

In terms of engaging civil society, ASEM was not, from the beginning, designed to be inclusive. In fact, it has been criticized for top-down process. Internally, partners could not reach consensus about the role of civil society in the process. "European governments and civil society actors have pushed for opening up the ASEM process against the opposition of many Asian governments".<sup>474</sup> The European Commission noted in 2000 that "*the active involvement of civil society in the dialogue between our two regions should be encouraged.*"<sup>475</sup>

#### 4. Working towards perception change, narrowing the cognitive gap.

This has been the main argumentation of this thesis.

In assessing that, it is fair to say that ASEM has already demonstrated its vitality. Now is the time to demonstrate new vitality in the changing environment.

### 6.4. Conclusion

Borrowing the words of the Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Asia is the region of "constant change".<sup>476</sup> ASEAN is at the forefront of occurring changes, the challenge is to embrace the changes and manage them. Following those logics, ASEM also is a subject to constant changes due to prevailing changes occurring within its Asian members.

To understand the current trajectories of the Asia-Europe Meeting, one has to take into the considerations the changes happening in Europe and in Asia at the same time. Hence, this chapter has argued that unlike the existing literature, the assessment of ASEM needs to include

<sup>474</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 118

<sup>475</sup> European Commission, "Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process in the next decade.," Commission Working Document (2000). Text available online: <http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/archives/asem-offdocs/eu.pdf> (Last retrieved: Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011).

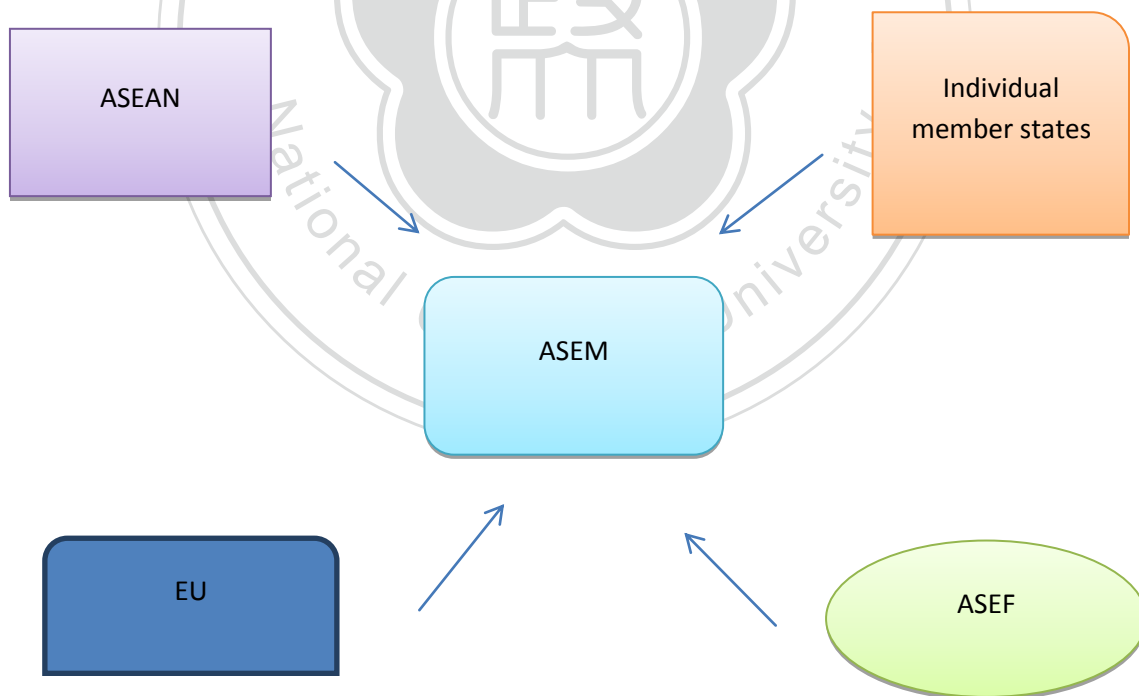
<sup>476</sup> Speech given at the 27<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

the shifting paradigms, interests and foci of regional and global processes. ASEAN in particular, as this section argues, plays essential role in these dynamic arrangements.

Internal politics of ASEAN member states influences the cooperation and attention of ASEAN in collective actions. That spills-over to the extra-regional dynamics as well. ASEM hence, reflects internal transformation of each of member states and particularly ASEAN. In attempts of finding equilibrium between Asia and Europe it is also relevant to strategize the change occurring in both regions. The question remains is who would take a leadership over strategizing role?

*“ASEM is not an international organization but this cogent consideration is mutatis mutandis applicable to its own functioning. If we can hardly imagine a world without strong international organizations anymore, in a similar way we cannot imagine the future of Asian-European relations without a more robust ASEAN.”<sup>477</sup>*

Graph 22 : Actors influencing change to ASEM process



Source: Author's suggestion

<sup>477</sup> Voicu, "Asia and Europe: In search of a New Partnership." P. 18



This chapter has argued that ASEM is a subject to change of its members. It has also worked as a channel of change, serving as a platform for communication, exchange and negotiation. It then played double role: as an interaction mechanism that facilitates change, and also a dynamic process that undergoes changes itself. The bridge is “moving” as the regions to be “bridged” are transforming, also in terms of scope. Moreover, this study also argues that ASEM is a subject of change by its “internal” institution, namely ASEF. The creation of ASEM has grown out of the ASEM management and is able to be proactive in bringing about the changes as well.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EVALUATING THE ASEM PROCESS: EXPECTATIONS AND LIMITS OF THE ASEM PROCESS THEN AND NOW

*“ASEM was outside of any cooperation tradition in Asia”.*

This chapter explains the expectations and the general atmosphere of the time ASEM was brought to life. The aim is to showcase the rationales, motivation and commitment that the parties had towards this new form of dialogue. The following section overlooks the rhetoric that was popular at the forming stage. Through the rhetoric, this study observes the design and hopes that were attached to this form of inter-regional cooperation. It then sees ASEM from EU's perspective of using this new form of inter-regionalism as its foreign policy towards Asia. Finally it compares with the view that Asia, in particular ASEAN, had towards ASEM.

The second section of this chapter offers an evaluation of political and economic cooperation of Asia-Europe inter-regional process. It outlines the achievements and limits of cooperation. The purpose is to showcase the reasons behind the challenges of this inter-regional dialogue as a political process. This section embarks on early evaluation of the Asia-Europe inter-regional process and leads to the main analysis, which will focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of cooperation.

#### 7.1. Expectations

##### 7.1.1. The rhetoric at inception

ASEM's creation was a precedence that was met with an extensive welcome. Following the rhetoric of governments' messages, media announcements, as well as the early academic studies the enthusiasm was commonly found. The inception of ASEM was named “a step change”

in the relations between the two regions, and “historical turning point” introducing ‘new dynamic’ for Asia and Europe.<sup>478</sup>

At the inaugural meeting, ASEM was called in the Bangkok Declaration as: “*the new comprehensive Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth*”.<sup>479</sup>

The Bangkok Declaration proudly announced:

“*A historical turning point in relations between the two regions, a new dialogue among equals had begun between Europe and Asia and the ‘missing link’ between Asia and Europe in the world triangle formed with North America was beginning to be firmly established through ASEM.*”<sup>480</sup>

At the heart of rationale for ASEM were the external factors, called ‘triangle of trade’. When ASEM came to life, analysts were eager to see Asia and Europe taking this “*golden opportunity to transform their relationship from one which at times bordered on mutual mistrust or mutual indifference to a partnership that can strengthen world trade and consolidate a global world system with profound benefits for both developed and developing countries.*”<sup>481</sup>

The expectations were high. ASEM was supposed to connect Asia and Europe and provide an equal balance to the existing strong ties of each of the region with the U.S. At the moment, the ASEM was seen as of capable to have equal weight and political importance that can build an isosceles triangle for the world order.

### 7.1.2. The EU’s expectation towards ASEM

In the European Union’s ambitions, ASEM could offer a remedy for a series of burning problems. Having such a dialogue frame engaging developing countries, not only it reaches the Asian markets and secure Europe’s interest in the region, it could also reach out to the

<sup>478</sup> McMahon, "ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting: strengthening the European Union's relationship with Southeast Asia."

<sup>479</sup> ASEM, "Chairman's Statement of the Asia-Europe Meeting."

<sup>480</sup> Hadi Soesastro and Simon Nuttall, "The Institutional Dimension " in CAEC, *The Rationale and Common Agenda for Asia-Europe Cooperation* (Tokyo: Japan Centre for International Exchange, 1997).

<sup>481</sup> Yeo, "The Bangkok ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations." P. 45

developing partners and communicate the human rights and democratization. As an EU analyst wrote:

*“The ASEM should accordingly serve to raise profile of each side, intensify the exchange of information between the two regions to improve mutual understanding; preserve world peace and maintain stability in foreign and security policy; sustain an open world trade system, as well as support sustainable development and integrate developing countries into world economy while continuing the fight against poverty and to promote democracy and structures based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.”*<sup>482</sup>

There was a degree of over-simplification that EU made when looking at ASEM as a channel to Asia. This is related to the problem of how “Asia” was perceived and what was associated with the region. It seemed highly irrational for the EU to expect that such a forum like ASEM can offer all-in-one kind of solution to the “developing world”. Nevertheless, it was connected to the perception, or lack of it, that Europe had for Asia. The issue of misperception which has a tremendous influence on the policy formulating, shall be further discussed in the chapter of norms, perceptions and identities.

Internally, individual European countries differed in their interests towards Asia which did not help solving the deadlock in region-to-region relations. While France and the UK remained strong bilateral relations with their former colonies, the multilateral arrangements were welcomed as a supplement to their existing ties. Portugal was particularly interested in East Timor and developing relations with Indonesian government. Scandinavian countries were concerned with human rights issues, particularly in Myanmar. Germany was in the stage of exploring economic involvement in the region. Smaller Benelux countries were the ones strongly supporting the group-to-group arrangements.<sup>483</sup> The European foreign policy towards Asia at that moment suffered dilemma of the priority of the human rights conditionality and the increasing benefits of engaging with rapidly growing Asian economies. Such duality of EC’s attitude caused the unsatisfactory and difficult nature of the relations with ASEAN in 1990s.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Serradell, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A Historical Turning Point in Relations between the Two Regions." P. 190

<sup>483</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 794

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. P. 794

Not until 1994 that the EC announced a communication “Towards a New Asia Strategy” that the earlier mentioned deadlock was cracked. Boundaries of “Asia” needed to be defined, but the document did not offer a satisfactory frame. Two years later, the EC issued another document “Creating a New Dynamic in EU-ASEAN Relations”, where ASEAN was singled out from “Asia”. By that time, the EU was pressured both internally and externally to specify its areas of interests for further development of contacts.

As discussed in the historical background chapter, against this backdrop, the Singaporean Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, proposed an innovative solution in forming an informal institutionalized meeting forum of Head of States and Government from Asia and Europe. The idea of ASEM was to provide a strategic umbrella EU and ASEAN countries, as well as Northeast Asian states for all levels of contact, all field of agendas. It was to develop networks of contract “*where EU-ASEAN relations were at their weakest*”, namely at the non-governmental level.<sup>485</sup>

ASEM came into life as an idea from ASEAN side. But the EU embraced it, seeing in the informality of its nature, the solution for the deadlock in the relationship with ASEAN. ASEM was too beneficial for EU to refuse; hence it gained such as fast approval. Through such a multilateral framework, Europe could diversify its politics towards Asia, making Asia less Sino-centric and refurbish the relations not only with ASEAN but also India. It served as the substitute for renegotiating the EU-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement, and it was also a vehicle for widening EU’s involvement in the region.<sup>486</sup>

As concluded by Michael Foster: “*The ASEM initiative therefore held out the prospect of an open-ended mechanism through which new policy concerns could be added to those considered in the ASEAN format with nothing a priori excluded.*”<sup>487</sup> ASEM solved the problematic membership by agreeing each side to choose their own members. This compromised allowed ASEAN to involve Myanmar into the dialogue in 1999.

Another innovative idea of ASEM was the inclusion of “other areas of cooperation”. ASEM presented also a value-added contribution by extending cooperation to new areas of

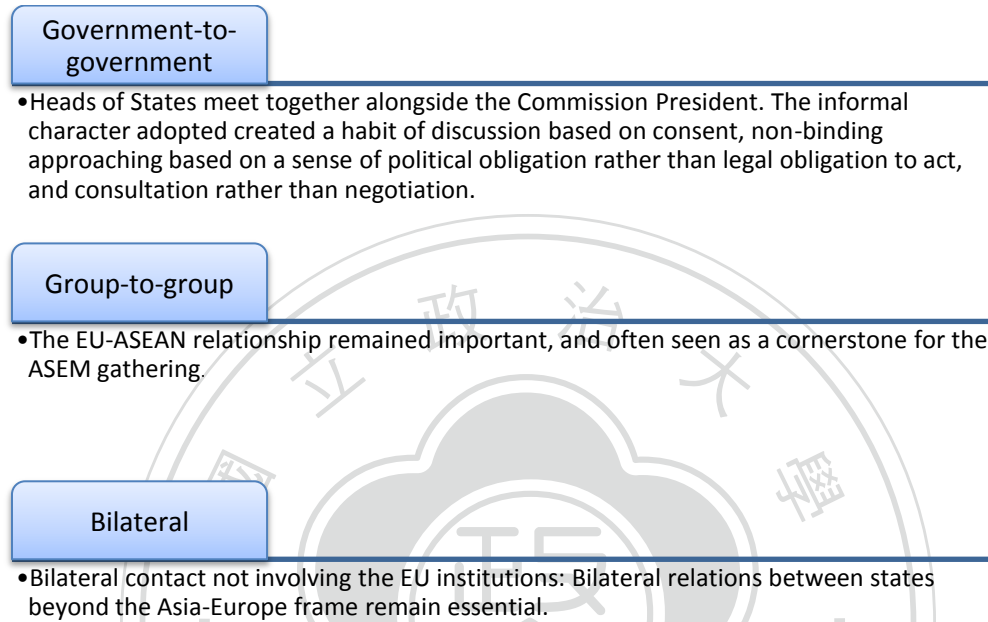
<sup>485</sup> Ibid. P. 795

<sup>486</sup> Tanaka, “Asia-Europe relations: the birth and development of ASEM.”

<sup>487</sup> Foster, “Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach.” P. 796

socio-cultural agenda. That way, ASEM provided distinct opportunities to engage “Asia” and “Europe” through a multi-layered relationship, each of which has their own different bargaining dynamics. The layers of interaction can be illustrated as below:

Graph 23: Levels of ASEM communication



Source: Author's analysis

#### 7.1.2.1. Interregionalism as a foreign policy tool of the EU

Inter-regionalism has been attributed to as EU's foreign policy tool as it is a major driving force behind the region-to-region relations taking place in the world. As ASEM started to face the declining interest due to its apathy towards Asian financial crisis a series of recommendations for strengthening ASEM were conducted. From European side, the EC launched a working paper “Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process into the new Decade” in 2000 and “The Europe-Asia: A strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership” in

2001. That document stated that ASEM was one of the instruments of the EU's relations with Asian countries.<sup>488</sup>

Analysts like Aggarawal and Forgarty saw interregionalism as a strategy *“aimed at achieving gains the EU has been unable to reap through more traditional multilateral and bilateral channels... while bilateral or multilateral approaches may serve specific goals more efficiently, inter-regionalism has generally proven productive- or at least not counterproductive”*.<sup>489</sup> Michael Reiterer noted that: *“For better or worse, the EU model has become the yardstick to measure regionalism and consequently inter-regionalism [elsewhere]”*.<sup>490</sup>

The Europeans are convinced that the *“regional integration can enhance peace, prevent conflict and promote cross-border problem solving and the better use and management of natural resources”*.<sup>491</sup>

In other words, inter-regionalism, particularly in the case of ASEM has been examined from European perspectives, outlining the benefits and challenges for EU's external policy. Borrowing Hettne and Soderbaum (2005) study, following is the reasoning of how such inter-regional framework should be utilized. They differentiated 4 tools through which the EU pursues its external relations:

- 1) enlargement which encompasses the candidate countries
- 2) stabilization in the post-Soviet countries, South Caucasus and the Mediterranean area
- 3) bilateralism with great powers: the US, Russia
- 4) inter-regionalism with other regional organizations or groupings around the world<sup>492</sup>

Interregional forums were very limited in scope of activities, because of the limited actorness of international organizations participating. In the past the inter-regionalism took an

<sup>488</sup> European Commission, "The Europe-Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership," ed. EC (Brussels 2001).

<sup>489</sup> Vinod Aggarwal and Edward Fogarty, "The Limits of Interregionalism: the EU and North America," *European Integration* 27, no. 3 (2005). P. 342

<sup>490</sup> Reiterer, "Interregionalism as New Diplomatic Tool: the EU and East Asia." P. 224

<sup>491</sup> Fredrik Söderbaum, Patrik Stalgren, and Luk van Langenhove, "The EU as a Global Actor and the Dynamics of Interregionalism: A Comparative Analysis," *European Integration* 27, no. 3 (2005). P. 370

<sup>492</sup> Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, "Civilian Power of Soft Imperialism? The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10(2005). P. 510



imbalanced form, where the EU was the most integrated actor. *“Currently, we are witnessing the end of hub-and-spoke system, as regional organization such as ASEAN and MERCOSUR are paving way to more balanced symmetric inter-regionalism”*.<sup>493</sup>

While inauguration of ASEAN-EU partnership in 1978 was “the real date of birth of the group-to-group dialogue”, the ASEM process is relatively young and evolves around the partnership between regionally integrated Europe on one side, and collection of 16 Asian states that cannot be identified as regionally defined group on the other side.<sup>494</sup> At this point, it is important to note that there is a need to differentiate ASEM from the EU-ASEAN process.

Allahverdiyev (2008) argued that the more regionally integrated the EU’s counterpart regions are, the more fruitful is the interregional dialogue. He also argued that as the interregional relations with the EU progress, the regional cohesion of the under-integrated counterpart region grows stronger. In other words, the more regional coherence the more fruitful interregional cooperation is. ASEM nested the expectations for the enhancement of the EU’s external relations to Asia: *“In long run, ASEM is supposed to play a decisive role in the formation of a common European foreign and security towards Asia.”*<sup>495</sup>

From the European perspective, ASEM could only work if there is a degree of formality. Establishment of formality within the ASEAN was against the core principle of the organization and the ‘ASEAN Way’ of regionalism, which evolves around loose intergovernmental cooperation. Nevertheless, in order to prevent the organization from falling apart as a *“useless platform of dialogue”*, formalization was necessary step that had to be taken.<sup>496</sup> Allahverdiyev spoke out the EU-centric vision in which he saw that the stronger cohesion of the ASEAN the bigger the success of EU-ASEAN relations, based on the EU’s support for ASEAN’s integration in such initiative as APRIS.

The motivations behind the EU’s New Partnership with Southeast Asia 2003 set relations with ASEAN resolving around six major issues:

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<sup>493</sup> Doidge, "Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism."

<sup>494</sup> Vugar Allahverdiyev, "Interregionalism as a Foreign Policy Tool of the EU: The Cases of ASEM and EU-ASEAN Partnership" (Central European University, 2008). P.4

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. P. 28

<sup>496</sup> Ibid. P. 34

- Supporting regional stability and fight against terrorism;
- Promotion of human rights, democratic principles, and good governance;
- Mainstreaming Justice and Home Affairs;
- Injecting a new dynamism into regional trade and investment relations;
- Supporting the development of less prosperous countries;
- Intensifying the dialogue in specific policy areas, such as climate change, transport, energy, culture, education, and information society.<sup>497</sup>

This reasoning re-confirms the interconnectivity between interregionalism and regionalism. Increased regional integration leads to the formation of more coherent foreign policy doctrine within the regional organizations and this, in turn, affect the success of interregional relations. In other words, the low or absent or regional integration decreases the productivity of interregionalism. The EU uses interregionalism as foreign policy tool to promote regional integration.

This links to the theoretical argumentation that interregionalism contributes to the evolution of international actorness capabilities of the regional organizations. Interregionalism also increases the legitimacy of regions as international actors. Interregional dialogues and partnerships are strong indicators proving that external policies can be conducted on the supranational level as well. It demonstrates that regional organizations are capable of developing global actorness capabilities for conducting international affairs. Hence, interregionalism legitimizes the existence of regional organizations as international actors.<sup>498</sup>

Complexity of relationship between ASEAN-EU and their interaction in ASEM can be conceptualized in “three worlds” following Michael Smith’s ideas:

1. Boundaries as defining spaces;
2. Layers and streams of policy interaction concerning historical, political cultures and authority systems;

<sup>497</sup> European Commission, "A New Partnership with Southeast Asia," ed. EC External Relations (2003).

<sup>498</sup> Allahverdiyev, "Interregionalism as a Foreign Policy Tool of the EU: The Cases of ASEM and EU-ASEAN Partnership." P. 43-44

3. Networks concerned with links at the non-governmental level, business, city-to-city contact, issue-specific networks involving policy communities.<sup>499</sup>

How and why it has become necessary to redefine the boundary between Europe and Asia? A part of the motivation for re-evaluating EU-ASEAN relations was the need to embrace the Asian economic growth and prevent the US misbalanced engagement in the region.<sup>500</sup> The EU became dissatisfied with the nature of EC-ASEAN bloc-to-bloc meetings, and saw the reason for it in “*the uncertain and imperfect nature of ASEAN integration.*”<sup>501</sup> The EC/EU was eager to develop own process of institution-building and saw the group-to-group cooperation vis-à-vis ASEAN a means to legitimize that. ASEAN on the other hand, was not equally interested in the bloc-to-bloc nature of the meetings and was uncomfortable with EC’s demanding and interfering attitude.

### **7.1.3. Expectations from ASEAN**

#### **7.1.3.1. ASEAN’s role in creating ASEM**

This section examines ASEAN’s motivations and methods through which it regulates contacts with other international actors. At the empirical level it focuses on the interaction within the ASEM framework.

To many observers, in proposing the Asia-Europe Meeting ASEAN proved not only commitment, but also a success in proactively seeking multilateralism. The ARF, ASEAN Plus Three and also ASEM, which were outcome of the active efforts of ASEAN. Moreover, ASEAN multilateral policy managed to “fend off impact of Washington-led APEC”.<sup>502</sup>

ASEAN came up with a concept paper on Asia-Europe Meeting in March 1995 under the title “Asia-Europe Meeting”. It outlined the:

<sup>499</sup> Michael Smith, "Negotiating the New Millennium: the roles of the European Union," in *Third Pan-European Conference on International Relations and Joint Meeting with the International Studies Association* (Vienna 1998).

<sup>500</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 791

<sup>501</sup> McMahon, "ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting: strengthening the European Union's relationship with Southeast Asia."

<sup>502</sup> Yang, "The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEAN’s Policy Toward ASEM."

- (1) rationale,
- (2) participation,
- (3) agenda,
- (4) timing and venue, and
- (5) frequency of meetings.

Under the rationale, the driving force was to establish the link that was missed between Asia and Europe and behind that was the economic drive. ASEAN envisioned informal and unstructured gathering of economic leaders from Asia and Europe, with participants to be chosen by each side by the EU and ASEAN respectively.

As the first meeting was expected to be “small and manageable”, the doors of ASEM are to remain open for future enlargement. In terms of agenda, the first summit was under the theme of “Towards a New Europe-Asia Partnership for Greater Growth”. Thailand was the first host of the gathering, and consecutive meetings were to be held every two or three years. ASEAN also suggested that initial preparatory work could begin at the inaugural ASEAN-EU Senior Officials Meeting in Singapore in May 2-4 1995.

The EU replied to ASEAN’s concept paper by offering its own, entitled: “Meeting between Europe and Asia”. It fully endorsed ASEAN’s idea of establishing the ‘Euro-Asian meeting’, agreeing on the tripolar world order and the need for strengthening Asia-Europe link. It welcomed ASEAN’s initiative on the new channel of informal communication. Europe was keen to keep this “experimental” forum at small number, but expected to continue the meetings. It suggested that for the sake of effectiveness, the meetings have the informal character at the highest level.

ASEM represented a precedential achievement of gathering such a group of Southeast and Northeast Asian countries together. The preparation years and the establishment of ASEM market Asian dominance as the venue, format, participants, agenda, and even the denomination were according to ASEAN’s proposition.

There was a political symbolism behind the name of “Asia-Europe Meeting”. Putting “Asia” before “Europe” showed that it has been an “Asian” initiative. For Europe to accept that

it proved that for the sake of interests in Asia, Europe was underlying “the non-Eurocentric focus in this connection”.<sup>503</sup> By insisting on “Asia”, ASEAN also proved a victory in keeping the forum open to other Asian participants. In fact, in the preparation phase, by the time the ASEAN-EU SOM really took place, it has become clear that ASEAN already invited the three Northeast Asian partners and they accepted to participate in ASEM.<sup>504</sup> Another Asian domination was the agreement on keeping the informal format of meetings associated with well exercised “ASEAN Way”, also later named in the ASEM context as “Asia Way”.

ASEAN was eager to invite the Northeast Asian neighbors to ASEM process. At the moment of inception, ASEM emerged on the foundations of ASEAN-EU relationship, and inclusion on non-members of those groupings was not essential. While EU prevented non-EU members from joining, ASEAN strongly encouraged the participation of China, Japan and South Korea.<sup>505</sup> By including them, ASEAN could opt for the expansion of the scope and size of its role as the counterpart of the EU. As the matter of fact, ASEM created for the first time a regional cooperation mechanism for East Asia. A year after ASEM’s inception, in 1997, ASEAN Plus Three mechanism came into life. ASEM presented an unprecedented chance for Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia to consult and formulate a joint strategy towards Europe.

#### **7.1.3.2. ASEAN’s duality towards ASEM**

On the one hand, ASEM was an initiative suggested by ASEAN member, Singapore, and the first Summit was hosted by another ASEAN state – Thailand. ASEAN was keen to develop another platform to interact with Europe outside of ASEAN-EU framework. ASEM offered not only that, but also inclusion of the most significant Asian partners.

At the moment of formulating ASEM, ASEAN grew into natural position to take a vital role in the new arrangement. While the importance of balanced relations with Europe and the U.S. has become clear to all actors, Japan was keen to invest in their good relationship with Washington and China traditionally was cautious about multilateral commitment. As the initiator

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<sup>503</sup> Serradell, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A Historical Turning Point in Relations between the Two Regions." P. 195

<sup>504</sup> Ibid. P. 191

<sup>505</sup> Yang, "The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEAN’s Policy Toward ASEM." P. 88

and propagator of multilateral inter-regional dialogue, one would expect ASEAN would take the lead.

On the other hand, ASEAN opposed the institutionalization of ASEM, insisting on informality, dialogue-format and non-legally binding methods. These rules are thought to be limits that impeded the growth of ASEM's relevance.<sup>506</sup>

From the beginning, ASEAN made it clear that it is looking for equality and mutually beneficial partnership. It was also strong in terms of human rights opposing the EU's pressure. Therefore, exclusion of human rights agenda from the inaugural ASEM Summit was considered a 'diplomatic victory for ASEAN'.<sup>507</sup> In attitude toward accession of Cambodia and Myanmar to ASEM, ASEAN insisted on its value of constructive engagement and managed to include their new members despite the opposition of EU countries. These examples showcased that ASEAN maintained consistency in its strategies and policies while seeking an improvement in its relations with Europe through ASEM.

The duality in ASEAN's position towards regional cooperation can be explained with costs and benefits of obligations towards multilateral institutions. Working on the principle of equality, for mostly developing countries of ASEAN, it is burdensome to share the same obligations as other more powerful members, in this case the EU states. Once becoming a member of multilateral arrangements, it is difficult and disadvantageous to withdraw.<sup>508</sup>

## **7.2. Evaluation**

### **7.2.1. Utility for the EU**

The utility of ASEM for the EU can be assessed threefold:

The EU's presence has contributed to an increased democratic involvement by ASEM's different stakeholders including parliaments and civil society. ASEM has also served as a

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid. P. 82

<sup>507</sup> Eero Palmujoki, "EU-ASEAN Relations: Reconciling Two Different Agendas," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 19, no. 3 (1997). P. 281-282

<sup>508</sup> Byun Jin-suk, "ASEAN's position and strategy toward regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific: Multilateralism and Small Countries," *The Korean Journal of Political Science* 20, no. 3 (1996). P. 408



platform for EU to ‘constructively engage with Asian countries’ to address the issues relating to global governance. Finally, “*ASEM reveals the EU’s dual identity as an intergovernmental grouping and an organization with a gradually increasing capacity of collective representation.*”<sup>509</sup>

The discussion is about how the legitimacy within EU is reflected in EU’s external relations. Argumentation is based on three components:

- Democratic control and accountability
- Performance or output legitimacy
- Identity

The reasoning is based on the principle of issue-based leadership, groups of partner states from the European and Asian regions invest and take part jointly in initiatives and projects based on their own interests and priorities.<sup>510</sup>

The roles of European Parliament in ASEM are threefold:

1. It exerts influence on the process by debating the ASEM-related documents, analysing summit agenda and conclusions, leading questions, resolutions and debates on ASEM.
2. Securitised the Commission’s funding support to ASEM.
3. EP enhances its participation by creating a supra-regional inter-parliamentary grouping consisting of the national parliaments of ASEM countries and the EP.

The Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) has been convened 6 times so far. ASEP has become increasingly institutionalise with its own rules of procedure, growing into a recognized player in the wider Asia-Europe interaction. In addition, it has clearly strengthened its vertical connections with both the ASEM summit and with national parliaments, and its horizontal ties with ASEF, AEBF and civil society.

*“International parliamentary institutions are increasingly important in overcoming the existing democratic deficit at both regional and global levels”.*<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 145

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. P. 153



In summary, as a result of EU's internal conceptions of legitimacy, gradually it became also involved into the ASEM process. The creation of supra-regional parliamentary body and an increased emphasis placed on civil society are incorporated into ASEM agenda.<sup>512</sup>

ASEM's direct impact on trade developments has been minimal, given its informal character. The forum was mainly seen as a trade facilitator, and a complementary tool to identify obstacles to market access and identify trade barriers in the bilateral arena. However, as a European Commission policy paper clarifies, in the light of Asia's increased global economic weight the EU's main purpose for ASEM was to establish a political dialogue with Asian countries. The forum's broad and long-term value was framed as follows:

- As a framework of political dialogue, overarching the themes which can be tackled within an economic dialogue;
- As an enhancer of multilateral approaches in both political and economic issues;
- As a complementary dialogue to existing bilateral and sub-regional levels.<sup>513</sup>

Gaens argues that ASEM serves the EU as another avenue to engage with Asian countries, to discuss challenges related to globalization or even just for networking and consensus building. That should be seen as an achievement or even its purpose already.

*"The EU countries can pursue a trade-based agenda at the bilateral level, while conducting a constructive dialogue with Asian countries on political or security issues at the interregional level. Purely from the perspective of institutional legitimacy, it is therefore significant that ASEM has gradually shifted its focus from a 'pillarised' approach to an economic emphasis to a political emphasis and a discussion of topical issues that require cooperation across Asian-European boundaries including global governance, climate change, sustainable development and environmental protection, soft security and intercultural dialogue."*<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Claudia Kissling, "The Legal and Political Status of International Parliamentary Institutions", *Background Paper* 4(2011).

<sup>512</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 156

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. P. 157; European Commission, "Regarding the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to be held in Bangkok on 1-2 March 1996," ed. COM (96) (Brussels 1996).

<sup>514</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 157

### 7.2.2. What ASEM can offer to ASEAN?

Given such a beginning, ASEM was expected to display ASEAN's one voice and strengthen ASEAN's position internationally.

However, in this equation another actor, even though not involved in ASEM process, had a say. The ASEM came into life as a balancer for the domination of the US. Both ASEAN and the EU hoped that ASEM, the missing link in the triadic order, could keep the unilateral US and US-led APEC "at bay". Although ASEAN participated in APEC, it opposed the institutionalized format APEC was taking.<sup>515</sup> The creation of ASEM; hence was not only aimed at enhancing relationship with Europe, but also to prevent the US becoming the dominant force in the post-Cold War order. From this point, ASEAN displayed a strong political will to independently determine its own future.

ASEM brought international cooperation to another level, offering not only economic, or strategic collaboration, but both of them and also cultural issues. It created a new form of comprehensive cooperation between two regions for a balanced improvement of mutual interests.

*"The principle is that cultural solidarity and common perception can occasionally be more powerful than institution."*<sup>516</sup>

Once again, the reference to culture and what is considered norm and perception is underlined in this inter-regional framework.

At that moment ASEM was expected to benefit from strengthening clout of ASEAN: *"It will identify new roles for Southeast Asia and Europe in the Asian region, while providing European support for raising the international status of ASEAN."*<sup>517</sup>

From the European Union's perspective, the benefits of relationships present as following: *"If there is any value in having relationship with ASEAN, or a relationship in ASEM or other*

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<sup>515</sup> Yang, "The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEAN's Policy Toward ASEM." P. 86

<sup>516</sup> Ibid. P. 88

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. P. 88

*wider ASEAN bodies, then it is as a clearing house in which you try to get an agreement... And that's also what ASEAN said to us.*"<sup>518</sup>

The ASEM process became a useful tool for the EU because it facilitated the existence of a multipolar setting in Southeast Asia. The ASEM is a forum that functions as a channel of dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Asia. Cooperation is promoted in political, economic, and socio-cultural terms. The establishment of the ASEM has contributed positively to the building of regional identity in Asia. Regional cooperation in East Asia presents a clear example of cooperation that was facilitated by the ASEM, especially, if we take into consideration the different perceptions that Asian countries have for the concept of regional identity.<sup>519</sup>

From the ASEAN point of view, ASEAN sees ASEM's contribution as following: *"The ASEM process has offered an excellent example of inter-regional cooperation, and it will continue to work to ensure that it can make progress in each of the 'three pillars:' political, economic, and social."*<sup>520</sup>

Moreover, since ASEAN has embarked to pursue the Community with three distinctive Communities and inclusion of Socio-Cultural as one of the pillars, issues other than security and trade gained some attention. ASEM and particularly the ASEF experiences offer ASEAN essential learning templates for cultural, educational and intellectual exchange programs. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community has heavier emphasis on social aspects than cultural aspects, opposite to the ASEM's third pillar. However, in terms of education programs and activities addressed to the youth, ASEAN learns from ASEF practices.

*"ASEF volunteer programs [managed by the People-to-People department] sets good examples for us. We learn from that model in establishing our own program. Also their student exchange programs are very successful. We take their best practices and learn also from the Erasmus Mundus program."*<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> European Commission official; Interview by Matthew Doidge, Doidge, "Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism." P. 243

<sup>519</sup> Lakrintis, "Regional Identity Formation in Southeast Asia and the Role of the European Union." P. 9

<sup>520</sup> Interview with ASEAN Secretariat official, Jakarta, June 2012

<sup>521</sup> Interview with ASEAN Secretariat officer, Youth and Education Section, Jakarta, June 2012

Another interviewee from the ASEAN Foundation shared her views on ASEF's utility: *"ASEF has been a recognized organization and has its essential network with UNESCO. We work to have such extensive network too. They have expertise on working with issues related to preservation of cultural heritage and natural heritage. In ASEAN region, we have much heritage to take care of."*<sup>522</sup>

Given ASEAN relatively new focus on the issues of cultural cooperation, experiences from interacting with A and participating in ASEF activities can well serve the purpose of learning. Although the ASEAN University Network (AUN) was established in 1995, earlier than ASEF, the first meeting of the Ministers of Education did not take place until 2006.<sup>523</sup> Moreover, the activities have been limited to the students exchange at the university level.

Unlike ASEF's diversity of activities addressed to different groups, ASEAN is yet to expand the scope of activities. The intensity of them is also a matter of development. With the commitments to the Community building, since 2009 AUN has launched 47 activities and projects related to education at regional level.<sup>524</sup>

International relations scholars may regard such value of ASEF and ASEM to ASEAN as "additional" rather than central. However, I argue that it is of essential importance, as it is the sphere where ASEAN is less experienced and needs that learning process. In terms of security and political cooperation as well as trade and economic negotiations, ASEAN as an organization of over 40 years, has an established record with addressing them. It is the socio-cultural sphere where there is room for learning and exchanging.

### 7.2.3. Convergence or divergence of expectations?

*"ASEM was welcomed by both sides as it was regarded as an institutional apparatus to harmonize regionalism with multilateral economic cooperation."*<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Interview with staff of the ASEAN Foundation, Jakarta, June 2012

<sup>523</sup> "ASEAN Cooperation in Education" Briefing provided by the ASEAN Secretariat.

<sup>524</sup> Data given by the interviewee, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, June 2012.

<sup>525</sup> Yeonho Lee, "ASEM in retrospect: A brief historical overview," *Global Economic Review: Perspectives on East Asian Economies and Industries* 29, no. 1 (2000). P. 5

Interestingly enough, for both Asia and Europe, establishing this “missing link” was considered still complimentary, if not to say secondary, to the ties with the U.S.

*“For the European side, the deepening relationship with Asia provided an important and timely complement to existing EU inter-regional relations with other important partners. For Asia, likewise, a stronger partnership with Europe provided a welcome complement to the Asia-Pacific partnership strengthened in particular with the establishment of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in 1989.”*<sup>526</sup>

Despite of the differences in motivation and expectations towards ASEM process, at the initial stage, both Asia and Europe had genuine intention of reinforcing the “weak leg” of the power triangle.

The “soft institutionalization” was a problematic consensus for Asian and European partners. On the one hand the EU welcomed it as the only solution for the ASEAN-EU deadlock. On the other, it was frustrated with the limitations that this format offered. The absence of binding and formal institutional decisions, although serving the interests of both sides, justifies the unwillingness of relatively poor Asian states to invest more into the institutional capacity building and further deepening of the ASEM. If the ASEM meetings do not produce obligations and binding decisions, they no to seem to validate the time spent and associated expenditures.<sup>527</sup>

Moreover, the intra-regional integration among the Asian countries that hold the ASEM membership is absent. This makes it very difficult for these countries to act as a single bloc and naturally, negatively affects the overall fruitfulness of interregional negotiations. Productivity of this interregional platform is closely linked to the level of intra-regional integration of the Asian members. **If the Asian states manage to consolidate their regional integration and act as a single bloc, then we may speak of interregional cooperation on an equal region-to-region basis.**<sup>528</sup>

<sup>526</sup> Serradell, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A Historical Turning Point in Relations between the Two Regions." P. 192-193

<sup>527</sup> Allahverdiyev, "Interregionalism as a Foreign Policy Tool of the EU: The Cases of ASEM and EU-ASEAN Partnership." P. 23

<sup>528</sup> Ibid. P. 23

In linking the tripolar worlds, ASEM had special role of building bridge for less established connection between Asia and Europe. At the early stages, much of hope was put on the weight that ASEM could have vis-à-vis the US and APEC. Segal in 1997 wrote that ASEM could play a crucial role in making the U.S. “*honestly comply with multilateralism*” and hinder its unilateral trade policies.<sup>529</sup> As much as the EU looked at ASEM as arena for emulating the U.S. strategy, for Asian partners ASEM was only a tool to enhance its negotiation capacity.<sup>530</sup>

In spite of the expectations, the EU has been unable to fully utilize the potential of the institution to pursue its policies in Asia and contribute to the further development of multilateralism in the world. It is due to the lack of EU’s interest. Allahverdiyev explained that it was because the Balkans and Iraq preoccupied EU’s attention.<sup>531</sup>

One of the reasons why the EU’s interest in ASEM started fading away soon after the establishment was because it had different format of working that the EU was used and believed in. “*ASEM suffers from the lack of binding supranational powers over its members and absence of a common institutional Secretariat, faces major challenges in reaching a common position and is prone to irrational enlargement accompanied with low and sometimes no intra-regional integration in Asia.*”<sup>532</sup>

The expectations from the Asian states towards EU as a peace and stability maintainer in the region are decreasing due to the low productivity of ASEM. The Europeans blamed Asian side, particularly ASEAN, who was not “ready” or committed enough to the integration, and hence, prevented ASEM from working as effectively as they would expect. Success of ASEM is linked to the level of regional integration in Asia, which currently is in a loose form. The Asian counterparts of ASEM are lagging behind the EU’s integration. This lack of regional integration among the Asian part diminishes overall the success of ASEM process.<sup>533</sup>

Because of the divergence of expectations, motivation and concerns, ASEM has been frequently blamed for leading to nowhere. The asymmetries were almost innate for the process.

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<sup>529</sup> Segal, "Thinking strategically about ASEM : the subsidiary question."

<sup>530</sup> Lee, "ASEM in retrospect: A brief historical overview." P. 9

<sup>531</sup> Allahverdiyev, "Interregionalism as a Foreign Policy Tool of the EU: The Cases of ASEM and EU-ASEAN Partnership." P. 27

<sup>532</sup> Ibid. P. 28

<sup>533</sup> Ibid. P. 28



### 7.3. The value of the ASEM process

#### 7.3.1. Political values: The political symbolism of ASEM

Despite the criticism about ASEM, there are significant changes and contributions that it has brought to international relations as an organization and as a form of interaction.

The political dialogue was to “*highlight and expand common ground, enhance mutual understanding, trust and friendship and promote and deepen cooperation.*”<sup>534</sup> The biggest significance of ASEM was the very fact that it took place at all. Yeo Lay Hwee saw in the establishment of ASEM “*the high-profile kick-start to Asia’s and Europe’s rediscovery of each other.*”<sup>535</sup>

The major value of ASEM was not in the tangible aspects of economic and strategic benefits. It has laid in the ground of conceptions. “*ASEM was a good opportunity to lay to rest the past colonial relationship and the years of misperceptions and mistrust between Europe and Asia.*”<sup>536</sup>

ASEM, for the first time gathered Heads of Asian and European states on the equal terms, symbolized Asia’s new status as well as the recognition of this status by Europeans. Hence, ASEM went beyond economic and political dialogue and set agenda of working towards **bridging the knowledge gap**, changing the mind-sets and prejudice both Asia and Europe had toward each other. In fact, ASEM provided a political sheath, particularly for Asian members, in which inter-regional meetings were an opportunity for enhancing international profile serving domestic political propaganda at the same time.

The novelty of ASEM process was the diversity it embraced – not only in terms of bringing together Asians and Europeans, but also in terms of the diversity in each of the regions involved.

The first ASEM Summit had modest goals: to make the participants see the usefulness of the summit, increase their understanding of each other, have some substantial follow-ups, and

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<sup>534</sup> ASEM, "Chairman's Statement of the Asia-Europe Meeting."

<sup>535</sup> Yeo, "The Bangkok ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations." P. 33

<sup>536</sup> Ibid. P. 36



concrete decisions to assure the public that the summit was worthwhile.<sup>537</sup> All of them were achieved. More than that, the ASEM1 gave a chance for leaders from Asia and Europe to meet in person and establish personal relationships.

*“The success of ASEM is very much to the credit of the ASEAN countries”* – wrote Victor Pou Serradell in 1996, at the moment the adviser to the Deputy Director General DGI. *“They have once again taken the lead in reinforcing regional cooperation while linking it to countries outside Asia. The ASEAN model for economic integration and political cooperation will seem even more attractive to countries in the region. The EU has every reason to welcome such a development since economic integration in Asia enhances European prospects for cooperation with the region, both bilaterally and within the framework of ASEM.”*<sup>538</sup>

Not only did it link the regions far away from each other, but it also linked sub-regions and neighbors who were geographically close but politically distant. The connection it made for Asian states cannot be stressed enough. The political dimension of ASEM was not limited to building precedential dialogue between Asia and Europe, but also in building a platform for intra-Asian interaction. The intention to build a coherent intra-Asian grouping capable of having a common voice, particularly facing the “Other” region of Europe, is a significant turn in the history of Asian regionalism. This contributed to the creation of ASEAN Plus Three and also has had its significance in building an Asian regional identity. The concept of regionalism through inter-regionalism shall be further developed in the chapter dedicated to identity.

*“On the positive side, the ASEM has developed novel forms of contact and led to the creation of new economic, scientific and cultural network.”*<sup>539</sup>

One of ASEM’s contributions is the inclusion of variety of actors into the process of region-to-region contact for economic, political and strategic reasons. In terms of extending broader EU-Asia relations, ASEM offered a successful channel through which EU could regulate contacts and advance their interests in the region.

<sup>537</sup> Serradell, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A Historical Turning Point in Relations between the Two Regions." P. 199

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. P. 210

<sup>539</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 799

*“Another useful spin-off from the ASEM summits has been bilateral meetings that have usually taken place on the fringes of the summit itself. Indeed, the flurry of such bilateral meetings has become a prominent feature of ASEM summits. A record of fifty –five bilateral meetings between leaders and thirty-five bilateral meetings at the ministerial level was reported in Seoul.”*<sup>540</sup> So the summits contribute not only to the development of multilateral habit, but also have become an important opportunity and avenue for countries to engage in bilateral meetings to cut deals or discuss issues affecting bilateral relationships.

Finally, the ASEM process nurtured the habit of transferring difficult questions from the Heads of States and Government level to networks for more informal and “safe” environment, where discussions could take place out of ‘politico-ideological’ context. Dialogue was underlined from the beginning of the ASEM process. ASEAN-EU, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Meetings (AMM) were listed as the good examples for fostering a political dialogue which would enhance understanding and friendship and promote and deepen cooperation.<sup>541</sup>

In terms of security cooperation, ASEM’s added-value lies in the nature of substantial political debate among the members that concern not only European and Asian issues, but problems that equally affect the whole globe, like Weapon of Mass Destructions, transnational crime, transmittable diseases etc.<sup>542</sup> ASEAN’s piece to the ASEM’s table was the offer of the consultation nature, derived from Asian way, or more precisely, ASEAN Way, that included Confidence-Building Mechanisms and Preventive Diplomacy.

### **7.3.2. Economic values: Benefits and effectiveness of cooperation**

The changing distribution of economic power in 1990s created a desire for Europe and Asia to rebuild their “neglected” relationship. ASEM came to life as a response to that need and reflected the circumstances of that time. Two decades from then, the balance of power has altered much. Asia, Europe and ASEM, as well as non-involved US, all have different now, and

<sup>540</sup> Yeo, *Asia and Europe : the development and different dimensions of ASEM*. P.84

<sup>541</sup> McMahon, "ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting: strengthening the European Union's relationship with Southeast Asia." P. 245

<sup>542</sup> Bertrand Fort, "ASEM's role for cooperation on security in Asia and Europe," *Asia Europe Journal* 2(2004).

the needs are different. Given that ASEM be re-negotiated. So as the expectations, involvement and roles of ASEAN and EU and other members in ASEM should be re-considered.

It was the weakness in economic governance that received the heaviest criticism and cost ASEM the biggest mistrust. One of the most evident failures of ASEM governance was the inability to react to the Asian financial crisis. The only response was establishing 41 million-Euro ASEM Trust Fund to help finance technical assistance, but the fund was to be managed within the World Bank. Other than that, Europe provided encouragement that Asian economies should undergo structural reforms. *“The most important initiative of the Europeans was a non-initiative, namely maintaining, like the US, an open trading system capable of absorbing significant import from East Asia.”*<sup>543</sup>

*“In sum, ASEM has been unable to effectively contribute to global governance in either international trade or international monetary relations – not for the matter in any other realm of globalization”.*<sup>544</sup>

As for political and economic governance (first track), ASEM might have missed the expectations; yet in terms of second track (social and cultural) activities, the process has shown significant achievements. ASEM is to serve as a political catalyst for achieving mutual understanding and **enhanced awareness** through dialogue rather than as a substitute for other bilateral and multilateral for a linking Asia and Europe.

*“ASEM has not managed to develop from its deference-paying function into a meaningful utility vis-à-vis multilateral institutions. So far it has remained at a declaratory level, with little actual effectiveness.”*<sup>545</sup> The coordination of Track II remains weak, and that inability to systematically utilize the track-two diplomacy has complicated addressing sensitive issues.

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<sup>543</sup> Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Assymetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism." P.17-18

<sup>544</sup> Hanns Maull and Nuria Ofken, "Comparing Interregionalism: The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)," in *Inter-Regionalism and International Politics: Stepping Stone to Global Governance?*, ed. Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff, and Jürgen Rüland (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2005). P.230

<sup>545</sup> "ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forwards. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities." P. 63

The disappointment in ASEM's economic governance is reflected in the commonality of opinion that the inaction towards the crisis has destroyed the vision of ASEM's capacity. The crisis starting in 1997 changed the whole attitude towards ASEM. In fact, some observers conclude that "*if the crisis had taken place in 1996, ASEM would not have been born.*"<sup>546</sup> Europe was disappointed by the weakness in Asian economic structures, and Asia lost its interest in the diplomatic show that ASEM offered.

The critics of ASEM come from expectations that it can be a problem-solving institution. When it could not deliver effective solutions, it became an institution that cannot deliver and thus decreased in the significance. However, it is important to understand that ASEM is not a problem-solving institution. The solutions that ASEM provides are provisional, fragmented, contradictory and crisis-prone. But their values are that they provide space for counter-hegemonic movements.<sup>547</sup>

Its contribution is that ASEM is set at the meso-level of authority between states and the global economy. The problem ASEM faces relates to the general problem that inter-regionalism as such face. To see the effectiveness of ASEM, one needs to ask what are the content of inter-regional cooperation, what it is about indeed? The indication of region openness and global openness notes the possibility that consequence of assertive regionalism could be the separation of the global economy into competing blocks.

ASEM builds upon the existing bilateral and regional relations, and reinforce or facilitate multilateral initiatives. "*But to place interregional initiatives between bilateral, regional and multilateral levels of interaction between states is immediately to draw attention to the fact that they are potentially as much 'problem-making' as 'problem-solving'.*"<sup>548</sup>

Following these logics, ASEM has proved to be an instrument for enhancing economic development of the two continents, contributing to maintaining the regional and world peace and stability, and also promoting multi-polarization and unity in diversity.

<sup>546</sup> Lee, "ASEM in retrospect: A brief historical overview." P. 18

<sup>547</sup> Paul Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the new materialism," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no. 1 (1999). P. 25

<sup>548</sup> Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism." P. 26

### 7.3.3. Beyond “hard reasoning”: Where politics and economy do not reach

This section explains the reasons of ASEM’s limits beyond the hard reasons of political and economic cooperation. It goes to the deeper layer of norms and values, where differences and even more so, lack of mutual understanding are to explain the ASEM’s shortcomings.

First, the understanding of institutionalization and the degree to which ASEM could pursue it was problematic. Dent, Ruland and Yeo pointed out that ASEM is under-institutionalized, and thus, suffer from the lack of binding powers over its creators. As a result it turns into a “‘pleasant’ platform for inter-organizational exchange, but nothing more”.<sup>549</sup>

Scholars explained that the lack of mutual understanding related to the confusion over partners’ degree of “readiness”. Ruland even pointed out that the abundance of meetings and initiatives undertaken between the EU and Asian states through the ASEM platform has been mistakenly identified as a sign of progress and institutional maturity.<sup>550</sup>

The same author in another piece noted that “ASEM like other big institutions suffer from diluted process”.<sup>551</sup> Shallow institutionalization, also called “soft institutionalism”, is a common plague for large institutions, which indicates that further enlargement of ASEM may carry danger of widening but “shallowing” the process. Referring to what Michael Reiterer said, “soft institutionalism” of interregional institutions tends to adopt the institutional characteristics and cooperation norms of a weaker partner.

Ruland (2005) indicated that empirical analyses have shown that ASEM by all means have contributed very little to the rationalizing and agenda-setting. Yet, recent documents of ASEM have shown that the leaders have recognized and appreciated the opportunities that interregional forum offers as a multilateral utility<sup>552</sup>. Crisis of inter-regionalism was paralleled with weakening multilateralism. Hence the evolution of ASEM, in fact, was in coincidence with:

<sup>549</sup> Jappe Eckhardt, "Dynamics of East Asian Regionalism: What Implications for the EU?," *Working Paper European Institute for Asian Studies* (2005).

<sup>550</sup> Jürgen Ruland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11, no. 1 (2006). P. 59

<sup>551</sup> Ruland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to keep ASEM relevant?."

<sup>552</sup> Ibid. P. 9

- (1) Gradual shift of US foreign policy from Clinton's "assertive multilateralism" to Bush's "assertive unilateralism";
- (2) Decline of security multilateralism (mainly surrounded by US);
- (3) Crisis of trade multilateralism;
- (4) Crisis of regionalism.<sup>553</sup>

Having said that, I agree that through institutional lenses one cannot fully explain the ASEM process. In the perspective of institutionalists ASEM is a failure. I am hesitant to assess ASEM in such categorization, because from the beginning of the organization it was not envisioned to pursue institutionalism.

#### **7.3.4. Contribution of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)**

ASEF projects convey strong messages to all participants who are immerse in the unique experience of a multicultural working environment, gaining new perspectives to their work through the dialogue and a mutual learning environment. ASEF is important because it enhances the sensitivity, empathy, and cultural awareness among both the Asians and the Europeans. Since in Asia, such international platforms for mutual interaction are less common than they are in Europe, and where development of independent art organizations are still relatively germinal, as are the issues of freedom, mobility, and sustainability, ASEF's role is even more crucial in facilitating intra-Asia communication and dialogue.

Apart from its premiere goal of bridging civilizations and enhancing understanding between the two regions, it also provides a channel for communication for the Asians and thus contributes to understanding within the Asian region alone. Deflin Colome, the former executive director of ASEF, described it thusly:

*“A graphic boundary is useful in describing the origins of ASEF, stating that perhaps before creating the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Asia-Asia Foundation ought to have been created. But the fact of the matter is that in ASEF, our Asian side is also doing an interesting*

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid.



*exercise of coherence and working together, whose long-term results can be nothing but positive.*<sup>554</sup>

ASEF plays a pivotal role as an Asia-Asia organization that facilitates the contact and rapprochement among Asian nations and their peoples. One alumna shared her vision:

*“I strongly believe that meetings like these are of great importance not only to support mutual understanding of European-Asian cultural and artistic initiatives, but they also present an opportunity to share experiences throughout Asia and to start a real process of cooperation (...) and bring to Asian governments and institutions the consciousness of the great importance of the cultural developments in the international cultural arena.”*<sup>555</sup>

Similar concern was behind the project “Residencies Space+Artists+Managers+Communities” in 2005, where Ambassador Wonil Cho, then-executive director of ASEF, framed:

*“Aside from linking artists from Asia and Europe, the conference also contributed to the closer bonding among artists coming from the same region, especially from the Asian side. Whereas Europeans have a relatively good funding system which enables greater artist mobility, intra-Asian contacts and projects are still limited due to the lack of special funds. Hence, Asian artists and cultural professionals often remarked: ‘It was so good to meet and network with Asian colleagues in Berlin.’ This is also true not just in the case of Berlin but also in other ASEF supported projects.”*<sup>556</sup>

In-depth evaluation of the third pillar and ASEF in particular was offered in the chapter five. This section brings the wider picture of overall ASEM activities and includes the assessment of the “cooperation in other fields”.

<sup>554</sup> Colome, "The Asia Europe Foundation: Innovation and Challenge." 11.

<sup>555</sup> ASEF, *10 Years of ASEF: Voices from Asia and Europe*.

<sup>556</sup> *Residencies. Spaces+Artists+Managers+Communities. A post event publication based on the Conference RES ARTIS 05 Berlin*, (Singapore: ASEF, 2005).



## 7.4. The remaining gap

### 7.4.1. Limits and their reasons

Soon after the beginning hype, ASEM started to lose the anticipation from its members. Particularly in European side it was obvious for the reason of too little impact it had. Critiques started to overwhelm the rhetoric of expectation and keenness. “*ASEM contributes very little towards the development of multilateralism, since achieving a common position is highly problematic.*”<sup>557</sup>

After studying a vast Asia-Europe inter-regionalism literature, this review offers a typology that distinguishes two tiers of available sources. Above section summarizes the first tier that concentrates on the theoretical debate. The authors tried to offer a definition of inter-regionalism through the analysis and also expectations laid for the ASEM process. Another tier is more empirically-oriented. For analysts from this group, many of them coming from the insider perspective, having served in process (Reiterer 2002, Camroux 2006, 2008, Wanandi 2007), the structure, agenda, and effectiveness of the ASEM summitry is the main concentration.<sup>558</sup>

In terms of agenda, although allegedly three-pillars are of equal importance, yet most of literature has security and political economy focus. These include the ASEAN-EU bilateral relations as well as multilateral framework of ASEM. Christopher Dent (1999, 2003, 2004) has analysed economic dimensions of cooperation<sup>559</sup>. Yeo Lay Hwee, probably the most fertile and consistent author of this field, (Yeo 2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010), has analysed the

<sup>557</sup> Interview with an EC official, Singapore, June 2012.

<sup>558</sup> Michael Reiteirer, *Asia - Europe: Do They Meet? Reflection on the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Singapore: Asia-Europe Foundation, 2002); Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Assymetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism."; David Camroux, "The European Union and ASEAN: Two to tango?," in *Studies and Report* (2005).

Jusuf Wanandi, "EU-Asia Relations in the Wake of the ASEM Summit," in *Asian Voices in Europe* (European Policy Center, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2007).

<sup>559</sup> Christopher M. Dent, *European Union and East Asia: an Economic Relationship* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Christopher M. Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism: Future challenges for ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 1(2003); Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-Regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility."

ASEM process and the EU-Asian relations from policy, political-security perspective, as well as comparative regionalism angle.<sup>560</sup>

There are certain patterns appearing while reviewing literature on the subject. Early wave of the publications, starting from 1990s, tend to focus more on the theory, attempting at offering a more structural understanding of the process and its meaning, and even setting goals and laying expectations. Above mentioned are the examples of such efforts to link theoretical debates to the emerging ASEM mechanism.

After ten years of existence, with vast of reports on unsatisfactory performance (under the circumstances that occurred during that decade, namely the Asian financial crisis), the character of publications hit more critical tone. The second wave takes a step back from theoretical approach, and focuses more on practicality of achievements and non-achievements of ASEM. They are of catharsis character, pointing out what have been the reasons behind the ineffectiveness, making recommendation for future policy amendment. Most of them come from European perspective though, with dissatisfaction of Europe failing to take advantage of the potential of relations with Asia.

The initial excitement about ASEM as a “bridge between the civilizations” and the “missing link”, gradually turned into criticism. Among academic publications there seems to be prevailing scepticism or even disappointment while analysing Asia Europe Meeting as global governance (Dent 2005, Camroux 2006, 2008, Maull & Okfen 2006, Ruland 2006, Loewen

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<sup>560</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, "ASEM: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs* 1, no. 22 (2000); Yeo and Latif, *Asia and Europe: Essays and Speeches by Tommy Koh*; Yeo, *Asia and Europe The development and different dimensions of ASEM*; Lay Hwee Yeo, "Dimensions of Asia-Europe Cooperation," *Asia Europe Journal* 2(2004); Yeo Lay Hwee, "Japan, ASEAN and the Construction of East Asian Community," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2006); Lay Hwee; Lluc Lopez I Vidal Yeo, "Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM Context: Current Dynamics and Theoretical Approach.," *Documentos CIDOB* 23(2008); Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process.," Yeo, "EU-ASEAN Relations and Policy Learning.," Lay Hwee Yeo, "The Role of the EU in Shaping Asia's Future," in *EUSA Conference* (Los Angeles 2009); Lay Hwee Yeo, "Political Cooperation Between the EU and ASEAN: Searching for Long-term Agenda and Joint Projects," in *EU - ASEAN: Facing Economic Globalisation*, ed. Cillian Ryan Paul J. J. Welfens, Suthiphand Chirathivat, Franz Knipping (Berlin, Heideberg: Springer-Verlag, 2009); Lay Hwee Yeo, "From AFTA to ASEAN Economic Community – Is ASEAN Moving towards EU-style Economic Integration," in *Comparative Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Finn Laursen (Ashgate 2010); Lay Hwee Yeo, "Institutional Regionalism versus Networked Regionalism: Europe and Asia Compared," *International Politics* 47, no. 3/4 (2010); Lay Hwee Yeo and Wilhelm Hofmeister, *The Asia Europe Meeting: Enlargement, Engagement and Expectations* (Singapore: EU Study Center, 2010).

2007)<sup>561</sup>. They summarize ASEM's ten years process as failing to *"live up to expectations of inter-regionalism as one level in multi-layered global governance"*.<sup>562</sup> As Camoux views ASEM, from the very beginning of its existence, ASEM was affected not as much by disparities in capacities and levels of political will among the members, but more by differing expectations on both sides. ASEM's rather *"poor performance"* as it failed to fulfil agenda-setting in UN- or WTO-style of multilateral arrangement. Hence, as Dent phrased it, ASEM revealed *"insufficient multilateral utility."*<sup>563</sup>

I argue that utility in that sense cannot assess ASEM's value, which lies in the cognitive benefit of awakening the actors for a more conscious and deeper level of regionalism process.

Ruland and Loewen came up with the following reasons behind ASEM's weak performance:

- (1) structural weakness and lack of legally binding instruments;
- (2) crisis of security-related and trade multilateralism;
- (3) coexistence of two different cooperation cultures;
- (4) tensions between inter-governmentalism and supra-nationalism as the *modus operandi*.

Despite the good will and anticipation for the dialogue, ASEM in reality proved that *"shared interests do not guarantee a problem-free relationship."*<sup>564</sup> As tempting as it is, high profile and good intentions are insufficient to provide a momentum to the organization.

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<sup>561</sup> Christopher M. Dent, "Europe, East Asia and ASEM: Beyond the Triadic Political Economy?," in *Inter-Regionalism and International Politics: Stepping Stone to Global Governance?*, ed. Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff, and Jürgen Ruland (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005); Camroux, "The European Union and ASEAN: Two to tango?."; Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Asymmetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism." Jürgen Ruland, "How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11(2006). Howard Loewen, "East Asia and Europe: Partners in Global Politics?," *Asia-Europe Journal* 5, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>562</sup> Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of Asia-Europe Meeting: Asymmetric Bilateralism and Limitations of Interregionalism." P. 2

<sup>563</sup> Dent, "Europe, East Asia and ASEM: Beyond the Triadic Political Economy?."

<sup>564</sup> Yeo, "The Bangkok ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations." P. 34

To answer why ASEM and other inter- and trans-regional fora are only weakly institutionalized Ruland offered five-folds answer:

1. Balancing and bandwagoning is the main functions of ASEM and other inter- and transregional dialogues; there is no need for deep institutionalization;
2. The changing power equations include states to get involved in “multiple regionalism”; as trust in the efficacy of these fora is comparatively low and costs for building deep institutions high, state content themselves with shallow institutionalization.
3. The level of institutionalization depends on their cost-benefit calculations. If governance costs exceed opportunity costs, the likelihood for deep institutionalization diminishes (Pareto-optimal relationships between opportunity and governance costs).
4. Evaluation of costs and benefits rests very much on cognitive factors. Colonialism experience and a strongly developed concept of national sovereignty explain why Asian partners are not keep on deepening ASEM’s institutionalization.
5. Since the Asian financial crisis, the US unilateralism is constantly and powerfully on the rise, the US has shed the multilateral and regionalist image and substituted it by a power-driven approach to international relations.<sup>565</sup>

This dissertation agrees on the given reasoning, but it argues that the existing debates are accurate but insufficient to explain the nature of ASEM. Instead, this dissertation argues that ASEM cannot be assessed only on the effectiveness of cooperation on political, security or economic spheres. Traditional International theories are not able to fully explain the trajectory of ASEM. It is not an international organization in the traditional definition of it. It is an experimental aggregation of countries and regions where the scope of collaboration is almost limitless. The failure of ASEM lies in the failure of traditional IR theories in embracing the organization’s contribution that goes beyond interests and gains.

Instead, I argue that a focus on the ideal aspects of cognitive and perceptual can shed a light on the contributions, potentials and limits of inter-regional cooperation.

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<sup>565</sup> Ruland, "ASEM and the Emerging System of Global Governance."

### 7.4.2. Diversity and perceptions

Diversity of the members offers plenty of scope for disagreement. The fear of ‘clash of civilizations’ was hanging over the idea of cooperation. After decades of ‘neglect’, Asians and Europeans saw each other through stereotypes from the colonial memories. By the time the new phase of cooperation started, the mutual perceptions were still basing on the dated facts. *“Europeans have not done their homework on the [Asian] region’s new developments and new outlook. Many Europeans are not aware of the new Asia that is emerging.”*

European inward-looking attitude made Asians see Europe as *“fortress designed to keep out the non-Westerners”*.<sup>566</sup>

With such a start, it is no longer a surprise that people-to-people exchanges came to equal, or at least almost equal, importance with the economic cooperation and political dialogue. Perceptions lie deeper in the cognitive and decision processes and for them to change there is a need of sustainable efforts.

Unlike trade agreements or political decision, the work on each other’s perception do not have the publicity-drawing factor That is why the third pillar, dedicated to work on understanding, knowledge about each other, perceptions and values, was located as “low politics”. Nevertheless, the consistent work of ASEF has its contribution to the region-to-region relations.

Moreover, due to imbalance of levels of socio-economic development, there was continuing challenge of using social and environmental issues as instrument of economic competition. Yeo suggested working by dialogue and aid rather than by coercion.

Given the complexity of the EU’s agreement procedures, much different than other Asian partners’ style in ASEM, the challenge of ASEM has been to manage the economic and political boundaries, to which all members can agree to. Limits of ASEM political impact are connected to the EU’s restrictions over policy coordination. The European Commission is regarded both as a partner and a rival by the governments of many member countries, and the European

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<sup>566</sup> Yeo, "The Bangkok ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations." P. 39

Parliament is seen as an outsider with closed-door monopoly for policy-making process.<sup>567</sup> While within EU itself it is difficult to pursue a coherent policy, ASEM with its multiple levels, agenda streams and a wide variety of actors involved, each of whom has distinct sets of norms, it is even more challenging to reach that negotiated order.

What strikes in the falls of ASEM is the lack of shared objectives for ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ in this common commitment. For Europe, ASEM was a way to regulate institutionalized contact with Asia, extend ties beyond ASEAN in the region, and legitimize EU’s political and economic interests. For Asian participants, ASEM was considered primarily in context of trade, investment and financial prospects. *“The practice shows that the EU is trying to pursue a leading role in the process. In addition, the different objectives of the EU and those of the Asian countries can be an evidence of the problematic situation that the ASEM faces.”*<sup>568</sup>

However, the EU has not been consistent enough to take the lead in the process. Criticism of the EU’s failure to pursue its core values has mainly focussed on European pragmatism and inconsistency. The EU side-lined human rights issues in order to ensure the success of the first summit, which was criticised for securing the Asian market. As one of interviewers reflected this case as:

*“Money talks, human rights walk.”*<sup>569</sup>

This divergence in the vision and objectives had repercussions in the political meaning of ASEM itself. *“In many ways the dis-functionality of ASEM is a consequence of a sub-optimal framework that lacks a core agreement about what its objectives are.”*<sup>570</sup> On one hand, the EU sees the ASEM as a means for further regulation in an institutionalized framework for its relations with the region. On the other hand, Asian members view the ASEM as a way to further promote and coordinate their economic interests by sticking to the doctrine of ‘non-interference’ when it comes to cases of political decisions.<sup>571</sup>

<sup>567</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 798

<sup>568</sup> Lakrintis, "Regional Identity Formation in Southeast Asia and the Role of the European Union." P.

<sup>569</sup> Interview, Singapore, June 2012.

<sup>570</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 799

<sup>571</sup> Lakrintis, "Regional Identity Formation in Southeast Asia and the Role of the European Union."



To that end, ASEM weakness reflects contradictions of EU in their authority and legitimacy at the same time. With the EU as a supranational institution whose members pursue mutually contradictory objectives<sup>572</sup>, and Asian partners without specific objectives, ASEM can display neither coherence nor consistence in its action.

Despite the profound declarations, which may reflect genuine intentions, of Heads of States little substance has been resulted from that. Tony Blair, hosting the ASEM2, ensured that “Europe is standing and will stand by Asia in its hour of need” when the EU agreed to contribute to the ASEM Trust Fund and the World Bank, appointed a special envoy to the region and created a team of European financial expertise to advice ASEM governments in the wake of Asian financial crisis.

Twelve years later, the UK was one of the first to withdraw from the funds supporting ASEM activities. The issues of funding has been explored in both chapter five – referring to the ASEM effectiveness, and in the chapter six addressing the change of interest. This notion here supports the argument regarding the confused commitment towards ASEM.

#### **7.4.3. The mismatch of expectations**

ASEM could be seen as an example of capacity-expectation gap.<sup>573</sup> The Asian partners saw Europeans using “politico-cultural values and the prospect of enhanced contact as a pretext of excluding outsiders from prosperity.” Their involvement in ASEM was driven by self-interest of building network with Asian economies. For Europeans ASEM has created an idea of Asia that has been useful to blame the economic failures into one basket and placing Japanese government as responsible for regional crisis.<sup>574</sup>

In 1996 the EC evaluated ASEAN’s position in external relations:

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<sup>572</sup> Foster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach." P. 800

<sup>573</sup> Christopher Hill, "The capacity-expectation gap, or conceptualising Europe's international role," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31, no. 3 (1993).

<sup>574</sup> Julie Gilson, "Creating Asia through the Asia-Europe Meeting," in *Third Pan-European Conference on International Relations* (Vienna: 16-19 September, 1998).



*“The limits of this option are ascribable to the uncertain and imperfect nature of the ASEAN integration. Despite the good-will declarations and the narrowing of ties (e.g. the decision to have annual informal Summits), ASEAN is still far from talking with a single voice and acting as a single bloc.”*<sup>575</sup>

Almost five decades from ASEAN inception, and almost two decades from ASEM establishment, it seems that not much has altered from that opinion. ASEAN still does not have any common stand on how to act in an inter-regional forum and how can it utilize the diversity of members offered by this platform.

What is the purpose of multiple ASEM meetings? McMahon saw the challenge for ASEM from the beginning: ASEM mirrors the ASEAN development in a way that it builds bridges to support future cooperation in the years to come. But ASEM dialogues are not starting from scratch. The relationship between ASEAN and the EU has its continuance in ASEM, hence reflecting similar characteristics and limits. *“The lack of concrete and agreed goal for the dialogue process is an overt sign of its inadequacy.”*<sup>576</sup>

The inaugural excitement was two years later sharply contrasted with disappointment at the Second ASEM Summit. The Asian financial crisis revealed weakness of Asian regionalism apparatus.<sup>577</sup> Despite the emphasis on the equality of partnership, it became clear that structural imbalance between the EU and East Asia was not easy to be overcome. Failing to provide a “rescue plan” for Asian economies put the viability of ASEM under the question.

Not only expectations but also visions of the way towards which ASEM should develop were divergent. Asia and Europe had different opinions on the institutionalization of ASEM process. Asian members were keen to keep informal character of dialogue that would not threaten their economic and political sovereignty.<sup>578</sup> Their approach towards regionalism was rather de facto, based on building economic blocks by structural and practical cooperation. Unlike the

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<sup>575</sup> COM(96) 314, 25

<sup>576</sup> McMahon, "ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting: strengthening the European Union's relationship with Southeast Asia." P. 250

<sup>577</sup> Lee, "ASEM in retrospect: A brief historical overview." P. 5

<sup>578</sup> Camroux and Lechervy, "Close Encounter of a Third King? The Inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting of March 1996." And: Richard Higgott, "ASEM and APEC: The opportunity and limits of institutionalization in an era of globalization," in *Conference of the Asia Europe Meeting: A new dynamism for a renewed linkage* (KIEP and FES, 1996).

Europeans who preferred the de jure institutional format. The growth of the organization required a decision to be made over the institutionalization, which members were hesitant to take.

The paradox of ASEM is that its strongest point coincides with its biggest weakness too. ASEM's multilayered agenda is its distinguish feature and its pride. On the other, it has been criticized for the much diversified agenda, perhaps too diversified to be substantial.

#### 7.4.4. Informality or indecision?

ASEM adopted elements of the "ASEAN Way" of informality, consensus-building, flexible consultations rather than institutionalized and structured procedures based on legalistic and contractual paradigms. However, the absence of formality may decrease the responsibility, predictability, and overall seriousness and prestige of the organization. Informality is only a useful tactic during the early stages of the partnership negotiations, because it enables the formation of amiable discussion environments, since the parties have no official commitments and expectations from each other<sup>579</sup>. Yet, as the time goes by and formal settings are still absent, the organizations have a tendency of turning into "talk shops".

Yeo Lay Hwee called the period of 1997-2000 (financial crisis) as ASEAN's quest for soul searching.<sup>580</sup> Clearly, the indecisiveness of ASEM's direction was correlated with the ASEAN's development, that support my Hypothesis Three about the linkage between ASEAN and ASEM development.

Joergen Moeller commented "*ASEAN is ... [an] organization within the limits it has set for itself of which the most important is its character as an intergovernmental organization*".<sup>581</sup>

Doigde put the blame on ASEAN for the little effectiveness of ASEM. "The failure to achieve cooperation has been attributed by both Union and Association officials to the weakness of ASEAN as a regional actor. The EU officials have criticized ASEAN as not being an

<sup>579</sup> Hidetaka Yoshimatsu, "Political Leadership, Informality, and Regional Integration in East Asia: The Evolution of Asean Plus Three," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2005). P. 209-210

<sup>580</sup> Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process." P. 10

<sup>581</sup> Joergen Oerstroem Moeller, "ASEAN's Relations with the European Union: Obstacles and Opportunities," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2007). P.480

‘interesting partner’, a hurdle that could be overcome were they to offer the support of a “*real bloc, ten countries really of the same opinion*’. ASEAN officials, too, acknowledge this failing, nothing that ASEAN’s weak negotiating capacities constitute one of the main obstacles to convergence of policies with the EU”.<sup>582</sup>

It seems that the ball is on the ASEAN’s team. Much depends on how ASEAN is able to respond to the regionalism. As ASEAN is maturing, we can expect the evolution in the ASEAN-EU relationship as well. ASEM process would also be much related to the course that ASEAN takes.

Yeo Lay Hwee’s conclusion: “*The pace and quality of the truly interregional or group-to-group dialogue between the EU and ASEAN will depend much on the capacity and political will of ASEAN to deepen its integration.*”<sup>583</sup>

The style of “polite engagement”<sup>584</sup> of ASEM is somewhat frustrating for the observers and also the members who expect something more than profound rhetoric. The question is whether the leaders really believe in this rhetoric and in the genuine rapprochement of Asia-Europe relations? In this sense ASEM’s development is tightly related to ASEAN’s role and initiative.

ASEM could be seen as disappointing from the point of international personality. Given such a potential of such diverse spectrum of members, it is surprising to see that ASEM lacks of public visibility and awareness. After 17 years of existence, ASEM has yet to achieve that profile and prove it is a weighted international actor. I claim that an amalgamate of strong personalities cannot create a strong personality on its own. That is why ASEM can serve as a bridge between actors rather than being a strong-personality actor on its own.

One of the most popular criticisms towards ASEM is the elitism of the process. In fact, it has been known to only a small group of politicians and bureaucrats and some scholars.

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<sup>582</sup> Doidge, “Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism.” P. 238

<sup>583</sup> Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process.” P.17

<sup>584</sup> Lay Hwee Yeo, “The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): From selective engagement to comprehensive partnership,” *Sudostasien aktuell* Special Issue(2002). P. 8

The danger that ASEM is in at the moment is it has gone too wide in the range of issues it wanted to address. The proliferation of activities has led it to no-impact kind of organization where the members only meet up over the “laundry list”. Rather than committing to any particular sets of goals, the members compete over the initiatives that they can raise. Creativity in putting forward ideas seems to be of higher score than commitment to a long-run and deep-impact cooperation.

The management problem lies in the lack of vision and direction towards which ASEM wants to go. This is directly linked to the leadership issue, precisely the lack of it. Reversely, lack of leadership can be related to the lack or inconsistency of visions.

Because of difference in expectations and visions from Asia and Europe, ASEM has been caught in this inertia. Due to preoccupation of intra-regional dynamics, none of the partners has committed sufficiently to ASEM so that it could take the in-action leadership.

Performance of regional actors is shaped by the institutional set-up as well as by the political will of its member states. (...) *“The EU’s behaviour and normative ambitions are modified through interaction with Asian states in an institution such as ASEM. These elements are closely related to identity, the third yardstick for legitimacy.”*<sup>585</sup>

The University of Helsinki Network of European Studies evaluated the effectiveness of the ASEM network and its projects and argues that despite the achievements of the alliance on multidimensional dialogue which have gone beyond the organization’s initial focus on economy and trade, and which influenced the rise of hundreds of wide-ranging collaborative initiatives between the two regions, ASEM does not seem to reflect the full potential of Asia-Europe relations.

*“The reasons why ASEM was called to life ten years ago are very different from the present global situation, but ASEM does not appear to have evolved to a great extent.”*<sup>586</sup>

In the present circumstances, ASEM faces re-definition of not only direction but also the purpose of bridging given the rapid changes of environment in both Asia and Europe.

<sup>585</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 157

<sup>586</sup> Teija Tiilikainen and Dr Timo Kivimäki, ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward, University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, (March 2006), [http://www.asem6.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/en\\_GB/1146143532159/](http://www.asem6.fi/news_and_documents/en_GB/1146143532159/) (accessed December 5, 2006).

## 7.5. Conclusion

Summing up the analysis of mutual expectations of the members and their roles in the process, ASEM is as good as its “people”. The difficulties that it has been facing from the establishment are as following:

(1) Multiple contradictory demands. Multicity of goals challenges the organization’s vision and objectives. In fact, lack of clear vision and clear objectives’ strategy leads to dispersing focus, and “widening instead of deepening the cooperation.” Both aim and agenda of ASEM are dispersed.

(2) While it suggested to be a forum between regions, “it is increasingly utilized within each region as an auxiliary means of imposing – developing and reinforcing – the local hegemony of capital.”<sup>587</sup>

*“The ASEM process should not be seen as only promoting cooperation between regions – it is also used by states as a means of furthering the restructuring of their own societies. Asian leaders use the institutional dialogue to enforce the disciplines of neo-liberalism in their own societies, while European leaders employ their own version of the ‘Asian model’ to urge the need for modifications in the behaviour and expectations of their own workers and citizens.”*<sup>588</sup>

ASEM is not a static entity. As any international organization or regime, it has its own life from the moment of establishment. It started off as an inter-governmental forum, and therefore the goals and objectives would to some extent reflect the different expectations and interests of its individual members and the EC.<sup>589</sup> As the goals and perspectives of ASEM members change, the roles that ASEM can take should also be reconsidered.

As underlined, at the moment of arranging the dialogue, the actors involved suffered from misperceptions and low awareness about each other. ASEM offered a platform for multilateral diplomacy at low costs. So called “Summit diplomacy” was particularly beneficial for smaller nations who could use this convenient avenue to engage, communicate and present

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<sup>587</sup> Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the New Materialism." P. 14

<sup>588</sup> Ibid. P. 14 - 15

<sup>589</sup> Yeo, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): From selective engagement to comprehensive partnership."

themselves to other members. It was also beneficial to bigger and more resourceful countries as a complementary form of bilateral ties and public diplomacy means they have created on their own.

It cannot be stressed enough that the value of ASEM lies in the base of personal relationship for the leaders to nurture the habit of communication that could help future decision making.

Another contribution of ASEM was it managed to bring such a variety of states to discuss a variety of issues, many of which would not be an interest of individual countries. In other words, ASEM opened eyes of states not only to other states, but also to other problems and pressing issues as well as different approaches that perhaps would not occur to them if not for the ASEM. This education value is a valid contribution that ASEM process brought into international politics.

The common critics of ASEM as not being able to bring concrete impacts are somewhat unreasonable, given that it never had such legally-binding agreements ambitions. It meant to be a “loose policy consultation” with priority on exchange of information and communication to create a *“conductive atmosphere for long-term cooperation and not on reaping instant benefits or solving immediate economic problems.”*<sup>590</sup>

Despite the criticism, ASEM has created contribution that should be recognized. Taking a comparative stand of the lukewarm relations before the creation of ASEM, two decades later, the frequency of relations and the expand of relations are much more dense. It is hard to measure how many of them are purely indebted to ASEM and what is the percentage of simply changing global politics. Nevertheless, it is certain that ASEM has facilitated the process significantly.

However, ASEM does not operate in vacuum. It is affected by the evolving actors and regional and global events and realities. Over the course of almost two decades the power balance has changed. As much as ASEAN was taking the lead to engage other Asian states in the process, now it is overshadowed by China. Beijing’s policy towards regional cooperation evolved since, and is now more eager to show its commitment. ASEAN is not the only established partner for the EU anymore. China is enjoying much stronger interest from the EU

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid. P. 7



and the bilateral relations with Beijing has surpassed the EU-ASEAN ties. If the ASEAN role diminishes, the ASEM's role would also decline. If ASEAN's centrality and the leading role in the Asian regional architecture can be sustained, it can bring the security and Asian regionalism matter to the EU's priority interests.

On the inter-regional level, it seems that ASEM provides an opportunity of interaction and referencing more relevant to the Asian counterparts than European. Frequent absence of the EU leaders at the ASEM summits can be interpreted as squandering rare opportunities of *"meeting of minds and hearts with Asian counterparts."*<sup>591</sup> *"There are asymmetric interests between Asia and Europe on ASEM, with Asian countries apparently more enthusiastic as reflected in their attendance of the summits."*<sup>592</sup>

This however, adds to the argument that Asian networks needs further strengthening. The concept of "regionalism through inter-regionalism" does not completely loose its meaning even in conditions of more frequent and facilitated connections as it is nowadays. Again, this is related to the argument of realization and awakening the awareness of differences and identifying the gaps between the regions, that pushes forward the regionalism processes.

ASEM proposed a different format of international gathering than the western system knows. Rather than compulsion and obligation, it works on peer pressure and consensus. Despite the common criticism, it seems that the members are happy with the current format, or at least have no other ideas how to improve it. The multiplicity of agenda that ASEM adopts can be interpreted as multiplicity of roles that is able to take.

After the 9/11 incident the value of knowledge of cultures, religions and diversity has gained another level. ASEM had a new start with confirmation of its importance as a bridge between civilizations and as a facilitator for mutual understanding. It should not be underestimated that this is one of ASEM's biggest achievements: putting diversity and awareness of it on the forefront of political dialogue and economic cooperation. *"ASEM works on the basis of mutual recognition of the integration and equality of different value systems."*<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Fitriani, "Asian perceptions about the EU and the Asia-Europe Meeting." P.43

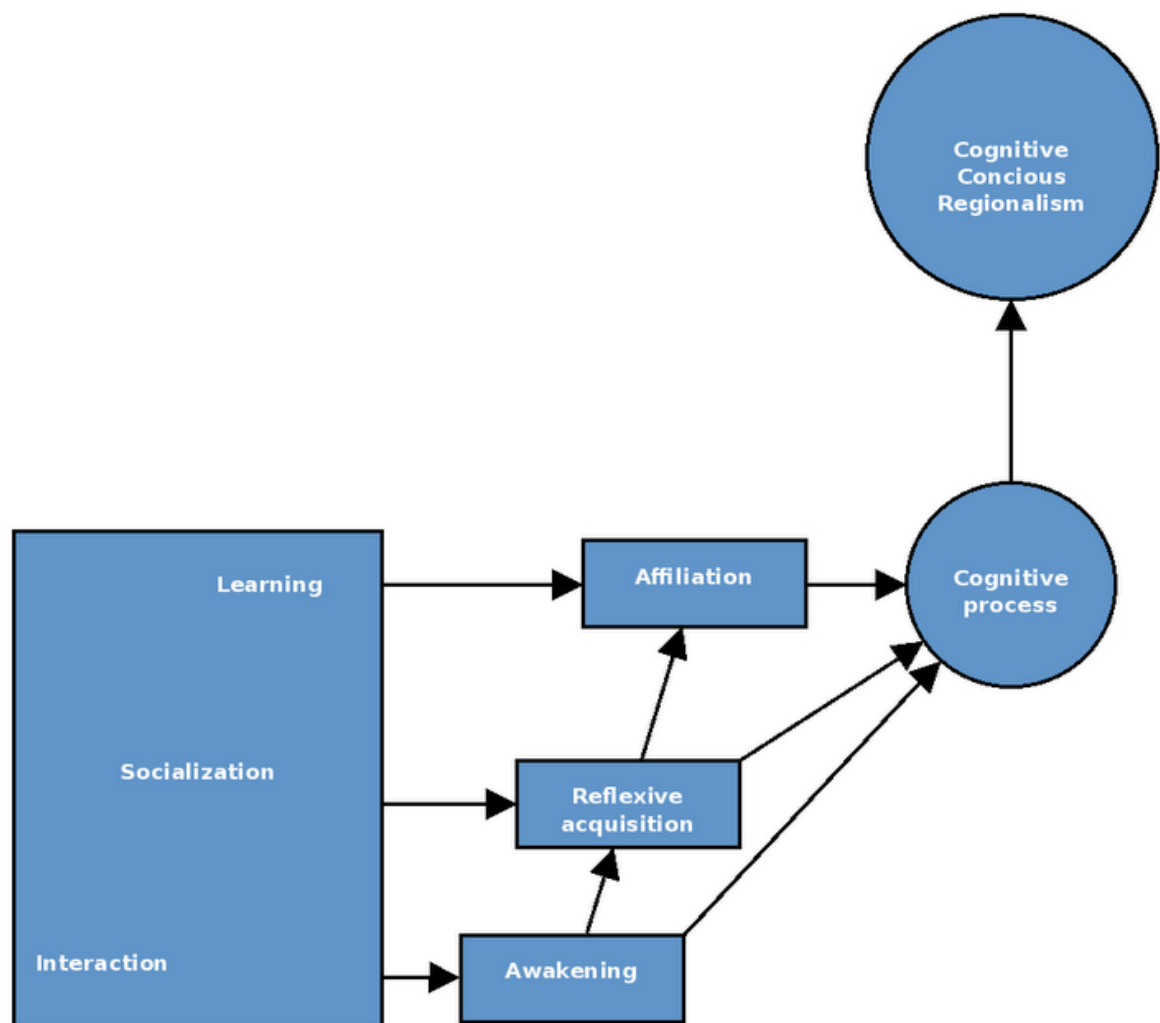
<sup>592</sup> Ibid. p.45

<sup>593</sup> Yeo, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): From selective engagement to comprehensive partnership." P. 14



In concluding notes, ASEM should reconsider its goals and direction for further development. ASEM is a socializing process; hence, the learning process itself is already an achievement. As much as it should be a clear distinction between mandates and aims of ASEM, and it should not be criticized for not having legally-binding arrangements, there is also a question of utility of such socializing fora. This dissertation has argued on different levels that international relations need socializing fora.

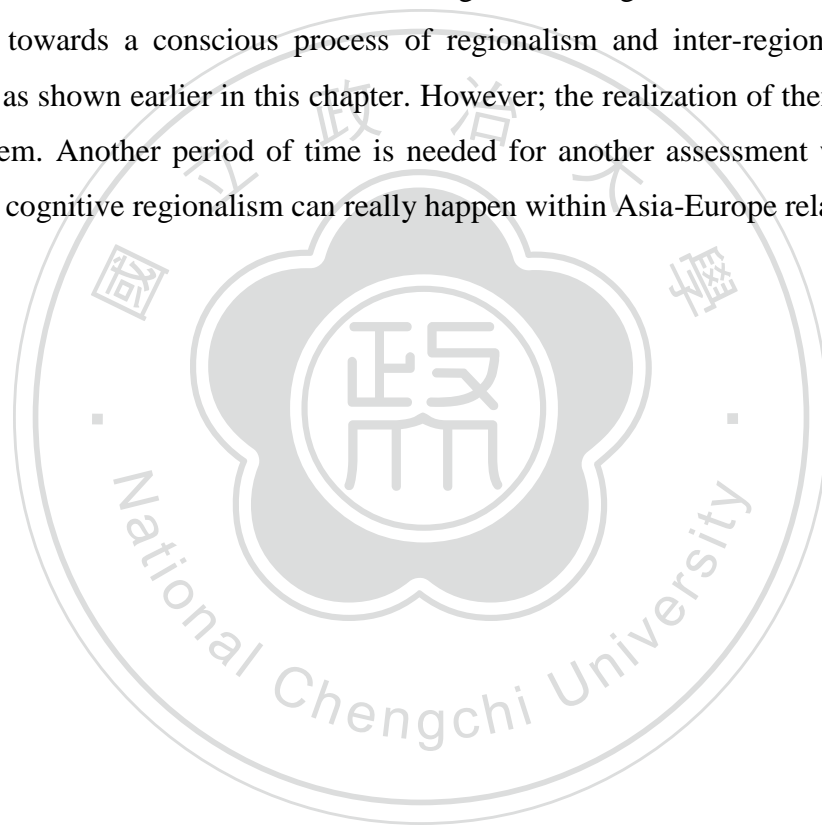
Graph 24: Model of ‘cognitive regionalism’



Source: Author's analysis

The above analysis supports my argument that a holistic regionalism process cannot take place without considering cognitive factors of actors involved. The perceptual and cognitive factors are embedded even on the level of rational expectations, strategic interests and cost-benefits of cooperation. Traditional international theories do not include the cognitive and perceptual factors, hence do not offer an exhaustive evaluation of ASEM's work and contribution.

It is not to say that 'holistic' regionalism has been reached through ASEM. Rather, what this study argues is that ASEM has created the bridge facilitating the communication of needs of actors to work towards a conscious process of regionalism and inter-regionalism. There are remaining gaps as shown earlier in this chapter. However; the realization of them is the first step to overcome them. Another period of time is needed for another assessment whether the final stage leading to cognitive regionalism can really happen within Asia-Europe relations.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has given an in-depth evaluation of the Asia-Europe Meeting. It focused on the under-researched cultural aspects of cooperation: as the agenda and as the method/norms. In this analysis, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was given the priority perspective. One reason for it is that majority of existing debates concentrates of the European Union's role. This research has been innovative in arguing that ASEAN has it essential role in creating the ASEM, and now, with the changes and transformation occurred, it can play even more important role and utilize the avenues that ASEM offers.

#### 8.1. Tested hypotheses

The assessment of ASEM answered the following working hypotheses:

H1. Cultural factors affecting cooperation cultures and institutional norms determined the low effectiveness of the organization.

The gap between the regions lies primarily in the cognitive and perceptual sphere. The cooperation between ASEAN and the EU and later in the broader aspect, between Asia and Europe were limited by differences in norms and perceptions that are affected by culture. Most of all the predominant feeling of strangeness and opposition widened the gap. De facto, the gap was imaginary rather than physical.

Interaction at first stage was new to both regions. At the initial stage of interaction, it is natural that differences are easier noticed. Therefore, there was a tendency of opposition, grouping to "Self" against the "Other". The Asian-side regional identity in the ASEM arrangements created a chance of building a collective identity through differentiation.

H2. The same cultural factors are at the same time the biggest contribution that ASEM has brought to the inter-regional cooperation.

This hypothesis has been tested positively. The cultural agenda became a norm that it was not before ASEM process. At the moment of inception, there was not even the term “cultural cooperation”, but to name all agendas beyond security and trade, it was called “cooperation in other areas”. The ASEM mandate to include cultural cooperation, as well as the practice of ASEF have gained the recognition not only from the member states, but also from global community, receiving appraisals of the United Nations. Cultural dimensions of cooperation have become a forefront of the Asia-Europe inter-regionalism:

*“Culture is the glue that joins different worlds of Asia and Europe.”<sup>594</sup>*

The assessment of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) showcased the innovation and success in the cultural, educational and people-to-people exchanges, creating of the habit of communication and knowledge and experience sharing. It also brought into the inter-regional process the bottom-up contribution and pluralisation of actors.

ASEF has lived up to functions of socialization and innovation in the bi-regional relations. By arranging conference, symposiums, seminars, public lectures, youth camps, art festivals, exhibitions, performances etc. it brings people from both regions to exercise the inter-regional dialogue. It serves as a platform for participants to engage in the dialogue with other representatives of Europe and Asia. That enables the actors to get to know each other and learn from each other's experiences also in terms of professional networking. ASEF's program areas concentrate on Cultural, Intellectual and People-to-People exchanges.

With a number of sustainable programs under the themes of international relations, governance, education, science, technology, migration, dialogue of civilizations, human security, energy and environment, heritage preservation, gender equality etc., ASEF plays an important role in innovation in terms of agenda setting and contributes to knowledge transfer. It has established academic journal *Asia-Europe Journal* in order to disseminate contributions of bi-regional intellectual cooperation. Thanks to continuous dialogue programs involving

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<sup>594</sup> Interview with the Vietnamese Ambassador to Belgium cum Head of the country's delegation to the European Union (EU) Pham Sanh Chau, Hanoi, April 2011.

intellectuals, academicians, policy-makers and practitioners, ASEF has contributed to the creation of a global epistemic community, influential for decision-making in both regions.

This hypothesis has also been considered at the civil society level of analysis, for the benefits of inclusiveness of civil society in the Asia-Europe inter-regional process.

Even though most of cultural and people-to-people programs are designed for non-governmental actors, the agenda of such programs have been prior decided by the member governments. The third pillar of ASEM includes a vast number of activities as well as actors involved. It has been designed to engage civil societies as a priority of its role, but some governmental representations and regional agencies are also invited. The common pattern of the meetings is to involve think tanks, official representatives, and individuals in order to have fair representation and diversified view on a problem discussed.

Although, this creates a “hybridization” of the character of actors, it could be regarded as a positive sign of nurturing pluralism and participatory of the process. It can be said that the through socio-cultural activities, governments connects and communicate with the peoples they represent. Hence, it’s not too abstract to say that the third pillar serves a function of connector between the political elites and civil society of both regions.

*“ASEM has become a convenient vehicle for promoting the concept of a shared identity in order to achieve regional cooperation.”*<sup>595</sup>

The cultural aspects are important particularly at the inter-regional level of analysis. The interaction leads to the mutual learning, consolidation of perceptions and building ideas of regional identity. ASEM created an environment for region-to-region meetings, “bridging the distant regions”. It has contributed to the notion of region-building, particularly important in the context of fluid notions of what is “Asia”. ASEM alone cannot take credit for Asian regional identity building, but certainly it has added to the weight of what I argue to be ‘cognitive regionalism’.

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<sup>595</sup> Lakrintis, "Regional Identity Formation in Southeast Asia and the Role of the European Union." P. 12

Cognitive regionalism is essential for advanced regionalism process. Security and peace comes first in any cooperation activities. Trade and economic exchanges stand for the benefit on top of peaceful co-existing. However, when the two first conditions are met, collective identity is the essential glue that holds institutions together.

The above conclusion leads to the testing of the second hypothesis:

H3. Unlike the prevailing literature that focuses on the EU's role, this dissertation argues that it is ASEAN that has played key role in forming ASEM.

This hypothesis is tested on the sub-regional level of ASEAN, as well as on the individual member countries level of analysis.

From the beginning, ASEAN was leading the idea of ASEM and was the one to insist on inclusion of Northeast Asian states into the process. This can be considered as ASEAN's leadership in creating a forum with such a diverse scope of membership. As a matter of fact, soon after ASEM creation, the ASEAN Plus Three framework come to life. ASEM has facilitated the habit of meeting for ASEAN to engage China, Japan, and South Korea into regional and multilateral settings.

*"ASEM has redefined the boundary between Europe and Asia. It initially offered an alternative to the hampered EU-ASEAN relationship in the early 1990s by extending 'Asia' geographically to include China, Japan and South Korea, and kept further expanding, reflecting the shifting global power balance and the emergence of new regional powers."*<sup>596</sup>

ASEAN has offered ASEM the working format and the style of cooperation, the ASEAN Way. Despite the fact that the EU was not keen on adopting it, ASEAN Way of informality, consultations and soft institutionalization has marked the ASEM process.

Despite that disagreement in terms of cultures of cooperation, ASEM can still result in a 'common place' between the two regions when the concept of integration is examined.

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<sup>596</sup> Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM." P. 158

After almost two decades since ASEM inception ASEAN is now building its new communities that includes of similar three-pillar structure, like ASEM. ASEAN is relatively inexperienced when it comes to socio-cultural focus. ASEM practice and experience in cultural, educational, and people-to-people exchange programs sets good examples for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community as well as ASEAN Foundation.

Moreover, the meetings of ASEM and ASEM serve a well purpose of public diplomacy in multilateral context for small countries like ASEAN. They provide them good access to a wide audience at low-cost efforts. Every member has their own motivation in participating in ASEM. Some have real objective, for the rest (now majority of EU) it's just a collective thing to do. Be there because it is appropriate, but little interest indeed. Vietnam and Singapore were particular cases of focus.

In terms of agenda of cooperation, both in intra- and inter-regional frameworks, the socio-cultural issues were, at the beginning, considered priority. In fact, in both cases, the third pillars have been developed from "recycled" basket of issues of what was called "cooperation in other fields" in the first place. "Other fields" referred to the issues that did not fit in the political-security nor economic pillars. But what was considered "low politics" has recently turned to be of high attention. In case of ASEM, the third pillar, thanks to activeness of ASEM, has up-graded its position and has been recognized as the most effective field of cooperation bringing most substantial outcomes.

It is ASEM now that manifests the soft power of ASEM, the value-added collaboration between the two regions and their peoples. The Association's focus on social and cultural spheres of cooperation is relatively new. However, that shift reflects its maturity as it has recognized the importance of socio-cultural cooperation for comprehensiveness of its Community in creation. With strong emphasis on identity building and awareness raising, ASEAN needs intensified cultural exchange and information sharing. One of prime functions of the third pillars is to enhance understanding among ten countries and raise the sense of commonness. Because in the past, this has been neglected sphere, today, in a few years from the ASEAN Community "deadline", strengthening soft cooperation should be of prime focus.



Moreover, as the global issues of concern are increasingly multi-dimensional, the strict divide into disciplines of cooperation is no longer satisfactory. In fact, the third pillars in both cases often serve as a cross-cutting role engaging relevant trans-disciplinary cooperation. Because of inclusiveness in terms of agenda, and “low politics” status, the third pillars are flexible enough not only to adapt to meet the challenges, but in fact they (particularly in case of ASEM) have set the tendency of global cooperation and governance.

On a critical note, the following two hypotheses underline the dependencies and are based on the structural conditionality of organization’s utility.

H4.ASEM development is correlated to the ASEAN’s development direction.

This hypothesis can be deliberated twofold: as (1) a change of organization, or as (2) a reflection of its members.

In the first understanding, the change is understood through the perspective of socialization and learning processes. ASEM is seen as a venue for interaction and learning. Being the platform for change, ASEM is a subject for change itself too. ■

In the second understanding, ASEM reveals similar characteristics. If ASEAN is incoherent, than ASEM is the same. If ASEAN does not have clear socialization strategy with conditionality, than it is a weak socialization. If ASEAN does not have that, ASEM is lacking too.

Taking the analogy offered by Acharya and Johnston: *“The more insecure the regimes, the less intrusive are their regional institutions”*<sup>597</sup> I argue that ASEM is insecure because ASEAN is insecure. Than dependency means that ASEM can be only as efficient as ASEAN is. ASEM’s shortcomings are resemblance of ASEAN’s. That would mean that the EU’s attempts of leading ASEM in its own cooperation culture did not work.

*“The organization is only as strong as its weakest component.”*<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> Acharya and Johnston, *Crafting cooperation : regional international institutions in comparative perspective*. P.262

<sup>598</sup> Interview with a government official, Kuala Lumpur, November 2011.

This might contradict with earlier argumentations, but on the other note, it actually reconfirms ASEAN's essential role in the process. Moreover, this also means that socialization is more important at low level of institutionalization and legalization. That is why for both ASEAN and ASEM, the value of interaction, dialoguing and socializing is so essential. Traditional concepts of realisms and institutionalism are not able to appreciate that value. Constructivist reasoning helps to understand the significance of socializing in this particular setting.

There is a room for maturing of institution, depending which way ASEAN would go.

Despite of the on-going criticism doubting about organizations' durability asking questions like: Has the time of ASEM come, now that there are established linkages between Asia and Europe, both multilaterally and bilaterally? Since the 1996, there have come to life many other forms of gathering bringing actors together and giving them chance to cooperate. Is ASEM obsolete? Has its life circle come to the stage of stagnant disinterest?

I argue that Asia and Europe relations are in need of better communication.

*"There is a big chance for revival of the mutual interest. Europe needs Asia and should be more interested in advancing relationships with Asia."*<sup>599</sup>

In that sense, this dissertation argues that ASEM is not an obsolescent, but rather dynamic and undergoing changes and transformation so as its members.

Ernst Haas argued in 1975 that the European Economic Community went through periods of growth in 1950s and 1960s, had come to the stagnant point of becoming obsolescent.<sup>600</sup> This evaluation can be considered as obsolescent now, but it certainly reminds of different stages of EC evolution. The same goes with the ASEM – it has earned substantive attention at early stages, but ever since has gone into the phase of stagnation. The revival is yet to come.

Despite the fading interest from the EU due to its internal crisis, it is to argue that now even more than ever, Europe needs Asia: *"Trade with Asia can revive European economy."*<sup>601</sup> Asia has a lot of potential and momentum to share with Europe. ASEM can well serve the

<sup>599</sup> Interview with a long-time observer of Asian affairs, Prof. Peter Drysdale, March 2013, Canberra, Australia.

<sup>600</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Obsolescence of Regional Intergration Theory* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies University of California, 1975).

<sup>601</sup> Interview with an official from EU External Services, June 2013.

purpose of this revival and hence renew its relevance. ASEAN needs European's acknowledgement for boosting its legitimacy and recognition of an external actor, important because of its experience in regionalism. Given such mutual benefits and interests, it is unlikely that ASEM will lose its utility.

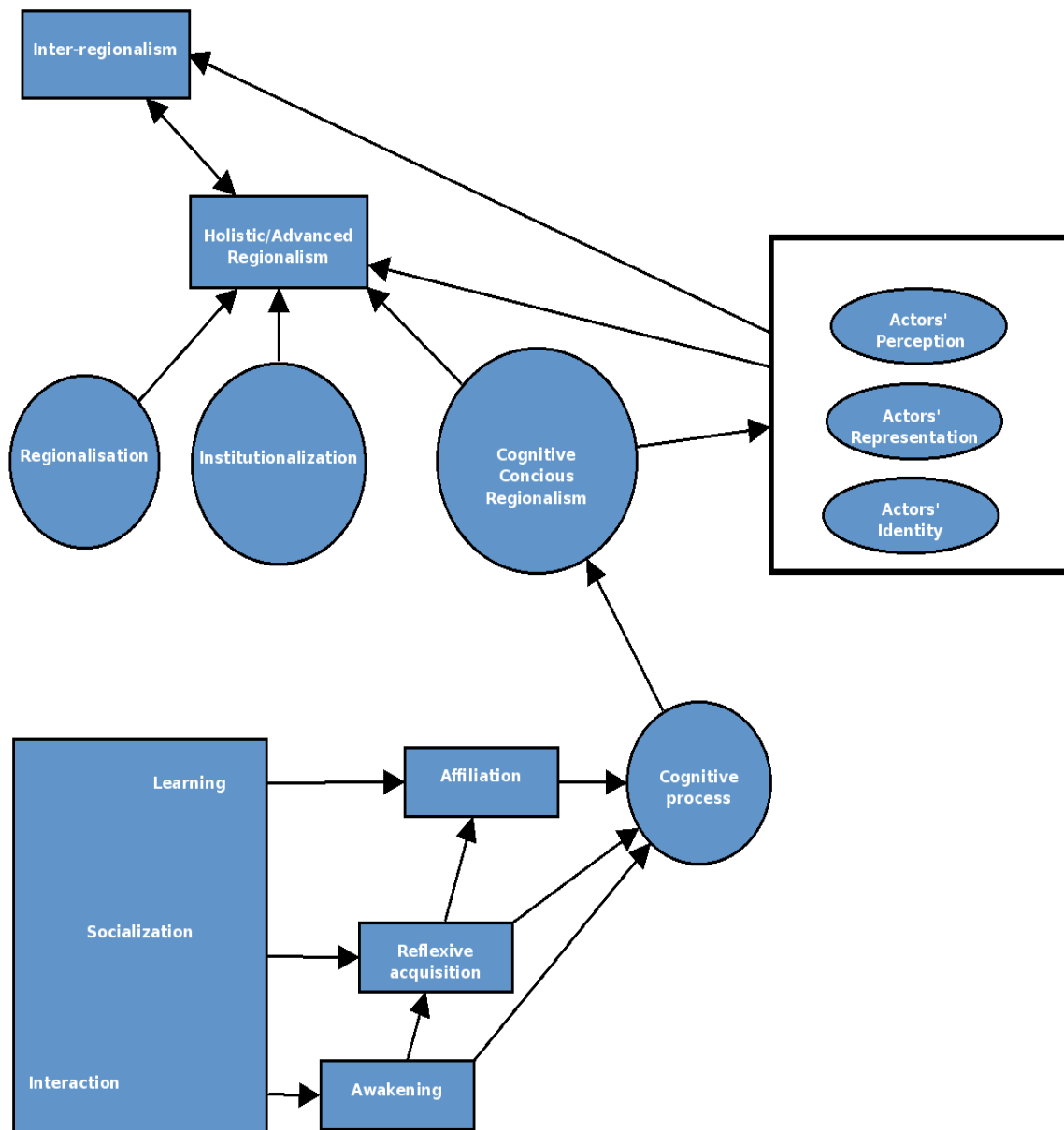
As far as ASEAN is able to sustain its relevance, and it is likely to maintain key position in the East Asian processes, and the EU still continues the interest in the Asian region, which is it likely to do, ASEM, as the avenue for both regions to reach each other, will remain useful. As an already established channel of communicating needs and intentions of communication, this dialogue platform remain convenient. Not only for the state leaders, but also it will continue to spread and extend its connections of the civil societies from both regions.

I have argued about the importance of, what I call, "cognitive regionalism" as an essential and the most advance component of processes leading to a holistic regionalism. Cognitive regionalism is the longest process of "winning heart and minds", where the actors have associated, affiliated with the region on the level exceeding tangible benefits. This sense of belonging is expressed with identity, representation and perception. Unlike the other forms of regionalism it takes the longest time to nurture the feeling of affiliation and it cannot be developed through political decision or state cooperation agreements. It need time to internalize and it can be reached through processes of interaction, socialization, cognition and empathy.

This study has argued that there are remaining gaps and the level of affiliation is yet to be reached. There is a need to sustainable and substantive interaction, exchange and communication further to be pursued in a timely process for the final stage of 'cognitive regionalism' to be reached. In the meantime, ASEM has created opportunities for that to happen by paving the way and contributing to the awakening and acquisition processes to happen. This is not to say that ASEM as a bridge is able to make the actors reach the complete 'holistic regionalism' but it makes actor realize of such an option and through socialization it works towards a collective commitment for that to happen.

To summarize the models I have proposed, an integrated model is depicted as following:

Graph 25: Summary of the argument



Source: Author's analysis

## 8.2. Recommendations

As a recommendation on how to more effectively utilize the ASEM avenue, ASEAN can consolidate internally more and act more as a coherent actor. For ASEAN's pursue of centrality in regional integration, ASEM can assist in legitimizing that role. At the early stage of ASEM, where ASEAN took the proactive role in insisting on the scope and format of meeting. It has already gained recognition of the EU and the other Asian partners. This is the time that it can leverage that recognition from all partners. With growing attention to ASEAN from other external partners, ASEAN is now in the best position of enforcing a leadership, at least within the ASEM settings.

It is the time for Asians to show leadership in ASEM, just like European could have taken the role when Asia was in the financial crisis. Policy and experience learning are expected. ASEM provides such an opportunity that now is particularly welcomed. If ASEAN is able to utilize that, its position and recognition for its contribution will certainly add to its leadership.

Taking into consideration the EU's interest towards East Asia Summit, ASEAN will be the essential link for the Europeans to get closer with East Asian region. ASEM can assist that and ASEAN's position in ASEM can become more essential.

The ASEAN Secretariat participation in the ASEM as a member, even though it is "a sleeping member"<sup>602</sup>, it already brings the legal representation of ASEAN. This is something ASEAN should not neglect.

*"ASEAN has turned into the hub of regional networks and has consequently become the anchor of regional integration."*<sup>603</sup>

From this point of view, ASEM's role is crucial as it can promote cooperation between EU and ASEAN and also function as a platform of good practices between the two organizations. Moreover, ASEAN can take advantage of the EU's need of boosting its economy while facing the financial crisis. This is the time that Europe needs Asian economies even more to recover

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<sup>602</sup> Interview with an ASEAN Secretariat official in External Relations, Jakarta May 2012.

<sup>603</sup> Jun Zhang, "EU in ASEM: Its Role in Framing Inter-regional cooperation with East Asian Countries," *Asia Europe Journal* 6(2008). P. 498

from the recession. Making the use of well an established relationship and the practices of EU-ASEAN dialogues, the interest for ASEAN and ASEM itself is likely to grow.

To be fair in evaluating ASEM's performance, one needs to come into terms with the fact that ASEM is not a problem-solving institution. Taking that into consideration, criticisms about the lack of legally-binding solutions, lack of effectiveness and weak delivery can be dispensable.

Rather, the meaning and contribution of ASEM can be examined from the values of learning, socializing and creating space and opportunity to communicate on regular basis. This study argues that it did not success in this role because it did not attempt to be problem-solving institution at the first place. Rather, ASEM is a bridge between the regions, facilitating the conceptualization of region-building and regionalism processes by exchange of ideas and practices. As a bridge, it cannot be assessed by quantifying the problems it solved. As a bridge, it can be only assessed by the quantifying the people and institutions that have used this means to reach their destination. The bridge is useful when the number of people and institutions know about this facility and make use of it.

Unlike what some observers' opinions:

*“There is a need for functional purpose for ASEM: If ASEM is able to develop a more concentrated form of functional cooperation, just like APEC, then it can remain its relevance.”*<sup>604</sup>

This dissertation has argued that ASEM is not a problem-solving organization. It sets an avenue for actors to solve problems. But it itself has not that capability. The capability it has is the cognitive change of perceptions and ideas thanks to the process of communication, exchange, socialization and learning.

A recommendation for ASEM is to increase the density of summits. A meeting every two years is not sufficient given the constant changes happening in both regions. This also reflects the issue with visibility of ASEM. More frequent meetings can keep the process more update and able to address current issues. That would require from the members more commitment of the time and resources, instead of seeing every two years for more long-term declaration-type of

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<sup>604</sup> Interview, Canberra, February 2013.

commitment. The intensity of meetings would also create a closer atmosphere of collaboration and work better for the socialization purposes.

Last but not least, ASEM should not base its institutional existence only on the Asia-Europe Foundation, which is supposed to deal only with the third pillar activities. This is not to diminish the role of ASEF, but for Asia-Europe Meeting to further develop and reinforce its relevance, it should establish a secretariat.

I argue that despite the established relations, there is still a need for further bridging the regions, particularly in terms of knowledge sharing and building experts' recommendations database. An example of that insufficiency is a quote I hear as a participant of Asia-Europe workshop "Common challenges of trafficking in persons", from an NGO representative from Austria:

*"In my 13 years of career working on trafficking, this is the first time that I have an occasion to discuss with experts from both Asia and Europe in one table."*<sup>605</sup>

Through such witnessing, I argue that the gap remains and there is a need of creating more opportunities of exchange and cooperation. Even though the high level summits do not intensify, the meeting among civil society and experts group should be intensified.

### 8.3. Summary

The most remarkable feature about ASEM is the punctual manner in which Asian and European leaders have met at the summit level.

The negotiation history of ASEM testifies to a smooth and orderly process:

- Transparent methods
- Predictability<sup>606</sup>

Perhaps, the decreasing interest from Asian part is because they do not want to buy in what Europe is trying to sell – their model of integration and their perception of multilateral

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<sup>605</sup> Participatory observation, Workshop held in Vienna, June 2013.

<sup>606</sup> Gaens, "ASEM as a Tool to "Bridge the Cultural Divide"." P. 42



cooperation. And respectively, Asian style of loose talk shop is not attractive for Europeans to invest and commit more into the ASEM project? Because initial objective was to actually enhance the multi-polarization, the disperse nature of ASEM reflects that spirit of “encompassing all” (going nowhere).

To summarize the findings of this research the evaluation based on three pillars can conclude as following:

1<sup>st</sup> pillar – did not fulfil the initial expectations both from European and Asian sides. The political significance of ASEM is of limited influence.

2<sup>nd</sup> pillar – did not fulfil the expectations of global governance. It was not able to react to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1990s and it is unlikely to provide much of assistance to the European crisis at the moment.

3<sup>rd</sup> pillar – there was little expectation at the beginning towards this pillar, rather it was considered complimentary. However, it turned out to have most substantial and sustainable input in the process.

The essential contribution of the process is the value of socialization and mutual learning. It came with the cultural cooperation agenda, where it is less sensitive, and hence more acceptable, to include the new ideas. In this way, the concepts of civil society and human rights got into the table of discussion without moralizing connotations. The transformations within Asia and Europe internally are reflected in the change of the dialogue platform.

Today, Asian and European leaders are much more confident in meeting each other than two decades ago. Instead of underlining the gap between the regions, they are now more familiarized with each other. With the supporting conditions of globalization and technology, the two regions are no longer as distant to each other. Instead, the main theme of meetings is to find common interests and actions. The bridge has been built. It now has to adjust to the dynamic changes of the regions and perhaps not only bridge between them but also cross over to other.

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**APENDIX**

Historical timeline for the key events in ASEM development

<b>Date</b>	<b>Key events</b>
<b>1996</b>	Establishment of ASEM ASEM 1 Summit, Bangkok
<b>1997</b>	Establishment of ASEF
<b>1998</b>	ASEM 2 Summit, London
<b>2000</b>	ASEM 3 Summit, Seoul
<b>2000</b>	Asia Europe Cooperation Framework
<b>2002</b>	ASEM 4 Summit, Copenhagen
<b>2004</b>	ASEM 5 Summit, Hanoi First Enlargement
<b>2006</b>	ASEM 6 Summit, Helsinki
<b>2008</b>	ASEM 7 Summit, Beijing Second Enlargement
<b>2010</b>	ASEM 8 Summit, Brussels Third Enlargement
<b>2012</b>	ASEM 9 Summit, Vientiane Fourth Enlargement

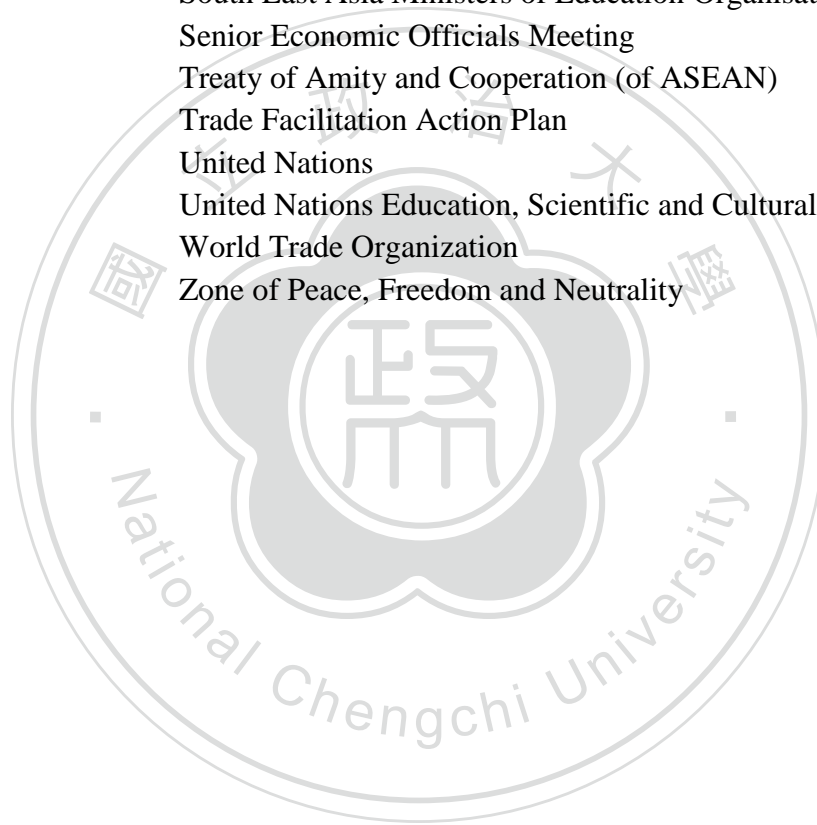
Source: Author's compilation



**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABC	ASEAN Brussels Committee
AEBF	Asia Europe Business Forum
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AECF	Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework
AEH	ASEM Education Hub
AEMM	ASEAN-EU Ministers Meeting
AEEPG	ASEAN-EU Eminent Persons' Group
AEPF	Asia Europe People's Forum
AEVG	Asia Europe Vision Group
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
AoC	Alliance of Civilizations
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASC	ASEAN Standing Committee
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-EU-SOM	ASEAN-EU Senior Officials Meeting
ASEAN-EU JCC	ASEAN-EU Joint Cooperation Council
ASEC	ASEAN Secretariat
ASED	ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting
ASEM	Asia Europe Meeting
ASEMBAC	Asia Europe Meeting Business Advisory Committee
ASEF	Asia Europe Foundation
ASEP	Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CAEC	Council for Asia Europe Cooperation
CFSP	Common foreign and security policy
CMM	Culture Ministers Meeting
CLMV	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam
DEEP	ASEM Database on Education Exchange Programs
EC	European Commission (European Community)
EMM	Economic Ministers Meeting
EP	European Parliament
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
EU	European Union

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
IPAP	Investment Promotion Action Plan
GATT	General Agreement of Trade Tariffs
NAS	The New Asia Strategy (by EU)
NATO	North-Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PMC	Post Ministerial Meeting
SCCAN	Special Coordinating Committee of ASEAN Nations
SEAMEO	South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation
SEOM	Senior Economic Officials Meeting
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (of ASEAN)
TFAP	Trade Facilitation Action Plan
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality



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