

**Inter-regionalism of nation-states:
Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) as a
case-study**

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List of Abbreviations

AEBF	Asia-Europe Business Forum
AECF2000	Asia Europe Cooperation Framework 2000
AEETC	Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Centre
AEPF	Asia-Europe People's Forum
AEVG	Asia-Europe Vision Group
AEYPM	Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians' Meeting
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEAN+3	Ten member states of ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEP	Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership
CAEC	Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
EAS	East Asian Summit
EC	European Community
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EMM	Economic Ministers' Meeting
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EU-LAC	EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEALAC	Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation
FinMM	Finance Ministers' Meeting
FMM	Foreign Ministers' Meeting
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPAP	Investment Promotion Action Plan
IR	International Relations
Mercosur	Mercado Com ún del Sur (Common Southern Market)
MM	Ministerial Meeting
MNCs	Multinational corporations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIEs	Newly Industrialised Economies
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum

SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	South African Development Council
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SME	Small and medium-size enterprise
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
SOMTI	Senior Official Meeting on Trade and Investment
TEIN	Trans-Eurasia Information Network
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Abstract

Writing a thesis is like writing a story book, this book is a story of the 17-year-old Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). It serves as a case-study of inter-regionalism, one of the newest cooperative mechanism in today's international arena. Among a variety of cooperative frameworks, namely, multilateral global governance, effective multilateralism, regionalism, regionalisation, inter-regionalism is much less explored. This research determines how the rise of inter-regionalism influences the actors in the international arena and vice-versa. The key actors in inter-regionalism and their interaction are explored.

Existing studies in the field of inter-regionalism in general and on the ASEM process in particular have been theory-led. There is a significant deficit of empirically-driven research in the field. In order to comprehensively understand inter-regionalism and the ASEM process, this research incorporates a substantial empirical focus. An unprecedented array of primary data is used. A variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods are employed to generate this unique and comprehensive empirical analysis of ASEM.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates the persistent state-centrism and lack of *actorness* of regions and regional organisations as independent actors in the ASEM process. Nation-state remains the primary actor in inter-regionalism; yet, they turn to bilateralism when more concrete cooperation or affairs have to be handled. The proliferation of sideline meetings, although as by-product, becomes one of ASEM's key added-value to international relations. The empirical analysis also finds that inter-regional fora like ASEM offer participants regular information and views updates and promote socialisation among government officials in the official track and among the involved individual from civil society in the unofficial track.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Research focus and research questions

Today, interdependence flourishes among different places all over the world. Incidents such as global financial crises, nuclear threats, transnational terrorism, cross-border crimes, epidemic diseases and climate change are threatening the world as a whole. None of them can be tackled by any individual nation-states alone. Meanwhile, the development of communication and transportation technologies enables people from all around the world to connect with each other on a global scale. State governments no longer monopolise the means to act trans-nationally. Coincidentally, many non-state actors, namely international organisations, regional organisations, multinational corporations, media, trade and labour unions, and different civil society organisations, have recently emerged in the field of international relations. In response, International Relations (IR) scholarship in the past few decades has examined the loss of power of the nation-state and denationalisation.

While some IR scholars and practitioners underscore the growing need for cooperation between states,¹ some other argued that nation-state has already lost its

¹ For examples: Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," *World Politics* 38, no.1 (1985): 226-54; Gareth A. Richards and Colin Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Interregional Cooperation in the Global Political Economy: Europe's East Asian Policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37, no.4 (1999): 686-7; Maryann K. Cusimano, ed, *Beyond sovereignty: issues for a global agenda*, (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2000); Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Forth Edition (New York/London: Longman, 2001); Pascal Lamy, "Asia-Europe relation: a joint partnership," *Asia Europe Journal* 1 (2003): 3-8; Rütland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant," 2006: 45-7.

centrality in the international arena and the role as effective lead players on the international stage.² It is argued that nation-states alone can no longer control what is happening in the world; they need to share their burden as well as their power with non-state actors. Bretherton and Vogler stated that today's IR could not be fully understood from a state-centric perspective but has become a multi-actor global system.³ This doctoral research determines whether today's international relations remain state-centric or multi-actor.

Concerning international cooperation, various possible cooperative frameworks have emerged such as multilateral global governance, effective multilateralism, regionalism, regionalisation and inter-regionalism. Among them, inter-regionalism is newer and much less explored. It represents a potential new layer of multi-level global governance. Therefore, this research focuses on the types of actors as well as their interactions in inter-regional cooperation.

The existing works on inter-regionalism have presented the possible configuration, nature and functions of inter-regional cooperative framework from a theoretical deductive approach.⁴ In this research, theoretical and empirical approaches are

² Luk Van Langehove and Ana-Cristina Costea, "Inter-regionalism and the Future of Multilateralism," *UNU-CRIS Occasional Paper 0-2005/12* (2005): 9-10; Hadi Soesastro and Jusuf Wanandi, "Towards an Asia-Europe partnership: A perspective from Asia," *The Indonesian Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1995): 39-58; Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Gareth A. 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): 148; Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jürgen Rüländ, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11 (2006): 45-47.

³ Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13.

⁴ For example: Heiner Hänggi, "Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives" (paper prepared for workshop *Dollar, Democracy and Trade: External Influence on Economic Integration in the Americas*, Los Angeles, CA, 18 May 2000); Jürgen Rüländ, "Interregionalism in International Relations" (conference summary, Aronld-Bergstraesser-Institute, Freiburg, Germany, 31 January-1

incorporated and the Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) is used as a case-study. Inductive approach is applied to determine what inter-regionalism can truly offer to international relations. The empirically data applied here is a unique set in the studies of ASEM and inter-regionalism. Details about the empirical findings are explained in Chapter 3.

While the international stage is becoming increasingly crowded and intricate, one major research question of this dissertation is ‘who are the key actors in inter-regionalism?’ The central question asked, then, is ‘how does the rise of inter-regionalism influence the actors in the international arena and vice-versa?’ Here, inter-regionalism is assumed to be both dependent variable and independent variable in contemporary international relations: existing international actors affect the formation and development of inter-regional cooperative frameworks and, inter-regionalism change the interaction and even power balance between international actors; it may even give rise to new international actor. In the existing studies on inter-regionalism, none of these questions has been addressed.

Applying to the case-study, a list of subsidiary questions are generated: how do the actors manage their relations with each other in the ASEM process; is it a struggle for power, a fair division of power or something between the two? Has ASEM fostered

February 2002); Jürgen Rüländ, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (National Europe Centre Paper no.35, workshop paper on Asia-Pacific Studies in Australia and Europe: *A Research Agenda for the Future*, Australia National University, 5-6 July 2002); Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Rüländ eds, *Interregionalism and International Relations: A Stepping Stone to Global Governance?* (London: Routledge, 2006); Rüländ, “Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant?” (2006): 45-62; Jürgen Rüländ and Cornelia Storz, “Interregionalism and Interregional Cooperation: The Case of Asia-Europe Relations”, in Jürgen Rüländ, Gunter Schubert, Günter Schucher, and Cornelia Storz eds, *Asia-Europe Relations: Building Block or Stumbling Block for Global Governance?* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 3-31; Mathew Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism - Patterns of Engagement* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

the role of the nation-states or given rise to the emergence of other types of international actors? Has ASEM contributed to a redistribution of power between state and non-state actors? Has ASEM simplified the way in which international actors interact or has it complicated the situation? Could the founding states of the ASEM process determine the development and evolution of the process? Can ASEM itself become an independent international actor?

Although this research focuses on the ASEM case, its conclusions are expected to be nomothetic, that is applicable to wider contexts of international relations. Understanding the mechanisms of ASEM promotes understanding of similar cooperative frameworks in today's international arena. This research provides a snapshot of contemporary international relations and shows how international actors deal with each other. Partners in ASEM also actively participate in other international regimes such as G20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Their behaviours in the ASEM process can reflect what happens in other cooperative frameworks. In this light, a multifaceted study of the ASEM process can add to a more comprehensive study of wider international relations. In order to generate a complete picture of ASEM, this dissertation covers the whole ASEM process instead of looking into great depth in one pillar or one particular issue area.

Conceptually, this research explores whether the existing IR theories are able to sufficiently explain the ASEM framework. In this regard, the dissertation aims to contribute to the debates among different schools of IR theories (namely, realism, liberal-institutionalism and social constructivism) on the IR actors and their behaviour.

1.2. The choice of ASEM as case-study

From the existing inter-regional frameworks,⁵ ASEM is chosen as case-study for a number of reasons. First, ASEM is one of the most advanced models of inter-regionalism.⁶ It involves the world's two most active regional organisations in the establishment of inter-regionalism, the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).⁷ Furthermore, ASEM brings actors from Asia and Europe together in a regular, high-level and large scale contact which had not happened before. It is also the first arrangement in history which brings Asia and Europe together on equal footing. Whilst the period between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century were called the European-Centuries, the twenty-first Century is now widely referred to as the Asian or Asian-Pacific Century.⁸ ASEM is a forum where the 'old' and 'new' world powers meet.

Until 2011, ASEM's forty-six countries represent 50% of the world GDP, 58% of the

⁵ Others include namely the Forum for East Asia Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), EU/Latin America and Caribbean Summit, as well as EU's relations with the South African Development Council (SADC), ASEAN, the Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur, and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

⁶ Gareth A. Richards and Colin Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Interregional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe's East Asian Policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no.4 (1999): 684; Julie Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (UK, Northampton/ MA, USA: Cheltenham/Edward Elgar, 2002); Christopher M. Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Interregionalism: Towards a Theory of Multilateral Utility," *Asian Survey* 44, no.2 (2004): 213-28; Julie Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia," *European Integration* 27, no.3 (2005): 307-26; Rütland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant" (2006): 45-62; Bersick Sebastian, "EU-Asia Relations: The Role of Civil Society in the ASEM Process," in *New pathways in international development: gender and civil society in EU policy*, Marjorie Lister and Maurizio Carbone eds. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 188.

⁷ Hänggi, "Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives" (2000): 4.

⁸ For example, Australian Government's *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* (<http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/>); Asia Development Bank, *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century* (2011, available at <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/asia2050-executive-summary.pdf>); Nicholas Kitchen edited, *Europe in an Asian Century* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012).

world's population and 60% of the world total trade.⁹ When act together, ASEM partners have the critical mass to bring global change. ASEM members comprises of numerous big or emerging big powers, namely the EU, China, India, Japan, Indonesia and Russia. The membership also embraces four out of the five permanent members of the Security Council of the UN, and three members of the BRICS group.¹⁰ Moreover, twelve out of the twenty leading world economies in G20 are members of ASEM. The ASEM process, which embraces interactions between many of the world most active players, provides representative snapshots of wider international relations. Noteworthy, ASEM is one of the very few international fora which exclude the US. While many studies already focused on the domination of the US in international affairs, this study aims to cover other actors in the arena.

In ASEM's various levels and tracks of interaction (including the summit, bilateral state-to-state relations, bilateral relations between a state and a regional organisation, intra-regional relations, government-to-business relations, government-to-civil society relations, inter-regional business-to-business relations and inter-regional relations among civil society), a wide variety of actors are embraced. Non-state actors namely transnational companies, trade unions, civil society organisations, universities and think tanks can all be found in the ASEM process. ASEM member states do not only interact with each other but also with non-state actors who are not conventional actors in IR. Furthermore, the European Commission and ASEAN Secretariat have their own memberships in ASEM. Independent membership of these regional

⁹ Chairman's Statement of the 8th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the Hamburger Abendblatt (28-29 May 2007). See also http://eeas.europa.eu/asem/index_en.htm (accessed 4 March 2011).

¹⁰ The group began with 'BRIC', with a meeting among the foreign ministers' of Brazil, Russia, India and China, in September 2006. It upgraded into summit level in June 2009. South Africa joined the third summit in Sanya (14th April 2011), adding the 'S' to the former 'BRIC'.

institutions makes ASEM an even more comprehensive case-study, as it serves as a testing ground for the co-existence of regional organisations and their constituent members as individual participants in the same cooperative framework. The representativeness of these two institutions is particularly interesting since a significant number of ASEM partners are in fact not member of either of them. In addition, ASEM itself has the potential to become an individual actor on the international stage. The involvement of such a wide range of actors distinguishes ASEM from other multilateral fora like G8, G20 and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which comprise mainly of nation-states.

Back in the mid-1990s, ASEM was an attempt among its founding partners from the EU and Asia to establish a new way to interact. It demonstrates the choice of the founding members, which consists of nation-states and regional organisations, when having an opportunity to create a new cooperative framework. Moreover, ASEM's informality makes it an alternative to the legally binding and result-oriented international cooperation, which is promoted in the liberal international order built by the US and Western European powers after the Second World War. ASEM's informality represents a new foreign diplomacy approach. Meanwhile, this research addresses also whether new fora like ASEM are changing such US/Europe-led liberal international order.

1.3. The existing studies and some gaps

Inter-regionalism is not a brand new concept in IR study, yet, the scholarly attention emerged only in the mid-1990s when inter-regional frameworks such as ASEM,

Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC),¹¹ EU-LAC Summit (between the EU and states in Latin American and the Caribbean),¹² and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or Barcelona Process)¹³ began. The majority of existing studies on inter-regionalism focus on its potential functions, especially the contribution as a new layer of global governance. A few scholars tried to define the new phenomenon. Some scholars discussed the reasons behind the proliferation of inter-regionalism in the 1990s. They summarised three main causes: the new wave of regionalism in the 1980s, end of the bi-polar world order after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and globalisation.¹⁴ For those studies which included case-study, the ASEM case was often used and referred to as the most advanced model for inter-regional cooperation.¹⁵

Being the highest-level interaction between Asia and the EU in such large scale, ASEM has attracted high scholarly attention since 1994, when the idea of its creation

¹¹ Its inaugural meeting was the Senior Official Meeting in Singapore in September 1999. Its official website is <www.fealac.org>.

¹² Its first head-of-state-and-government-level summit took place in June 1999 in Rio de Janeiro. Its official website is <eulacfoundation.org>.

¹³ Its initial meeting was the first Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November 1995. No official website is found. Information available at EEAS's official website, <eeas.europa.eu/euromed/index_en.htm> (accessed 6 May 2011).

¹⁴ Heiner H änggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 4, no.1 (1999): 56-80; Björn Hettne, "Regional Governance and Global Order," in *Paths to Regionalisation: Comparing Experiences in East Asia and Europe*, ed. Sophie Boisseau du Rocher and Bertrand Fort (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), 104-27; Weiqing Song, "Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance," *Asia Europe Journal* 5 (2007): 70; Matthew Doidge, "Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism," *Journal of European Integration* 29, no.2 (2007): 220-48; Heiner H änggi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen R üland, "Interregionalism: A new phenomenon in international relations," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, H änggi et al. eds. (2006): 3-6; R üland, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant" (2006): 47; Jürgen R üland, "Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism," *Journal of European Public Policy* 17, no.8 (2010): 1275-6.

¹⁵ See footnote 6.

first arose. However, after a decade, a bottle-neck appeared. A few points are found repeated in many works: the *raison d'être* behind the creation of ASEM; the seven potential functions of ASEM deduced from various IR theories; the development (or lack of development) of the process in the first decade; and a lack of deliveries produced from ASEM.¹⁶ In addition, the point that ASEM was established to complete the missing link in the triadic Europe-North America-East Asia relation has been repeatedly mentioned. Furthermore, some work became competition among scholars to coin jargons; subsequently, lost touch with the reality. This research aims to be substantial and to clarify misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations created thus far.

Regarding the content, many researches on ASEM were not comprehensive. They concentrated only on the summitry and neglected meetings at other levels and activities in other tracks of the process. This research demonstrates that the ASEM process has developed into much more than the biennial summitry (discussed in details in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8). Moreover, the timeframe covered in this research is longer than other studies which focused on ASEM's earlier years. This research sets a much longer timeframe which covers from the first summit in 1996 to the ninth summit in 2012.

¹⁶ A few exceptions were two papers about the US's views on the establishment of ASEM (David Bobrow, "The US and ASEM: why the hegemon didn't bark," *The Pacific Review* 12, no.1 (1999): 103-28; Bernhard May, "Trilateral Relations in a Globalising World. ASEM and the United States," *Asia Europe Journal* 3 (2005): 37-47) and the few studies which looked at the similarities and differences between ASEM, APEC and National Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Jacques Pelkmans and Shinkai Hiroko, "The Promise of ASEM," in *ASEM: How promising a partnership?*, Jacques Pelkmans and Shinkai Hiroko eds. (Brussels: European Institute for Asian Studies, 1997), 1-20; Hanns W. Maull and Nuria Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 1 (2003): 237-48; Vinod K. Aggarwal and Min Gyo Koo, "The Evolution of APEC and ASEM: Implications of the New East Asian Bilateralism," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 46, no.2 (2005): 233-262; Zhimin Chen, "NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order," *Asia Europe Journal* 3, no.3 (2005): 361-78.

In terms of actors, many existing works on ASEM and inter-regionalism have treated regions and regional institutions as independent actors. They highlighted the concept of *regionness* (the level of coherence and commonness among actors from a particular region, or the ability of a regional institution or grouping to take action as one single entity).¹⁷ Song argued that the ‘*de facto* system of regions’ or ‘era of regions’ made it necessary for regions to construct inter-regional connections with each other.¹⁸ Doidge researched on how regionalism and inter-regionalism mutually reinforced each other. He argued that the *regionness* of the constituent regional actors would determine the functions of an inter-regional forum and vice versa.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the focus on *regionness* becomes increasingly inapplicable in the understanding of ASEM as its membership expands and the *regionness* of the constituent regional groups dilutes. The role of other actors than regions in the ASEM process were often overlooked. This research fills these gaps by identifying all types of actors, both states and non-state actors, and their role in ASEM, hence in inter-regionalism.

Some observers attempted to assess ASEM’s achievements, especially in 2006 when ASEM’s tenth anniversary was celebrated. The assessments concentrated on several

¹⁷ The term ‘regionness’ was first used by Björn Hettne in “Neo-Mercantilism: The Pursuit of Regionness,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 28, no.3 (1993): 211-32. See also: Thomas D. Steiner, “Europe Meets Asia: ‘Old’ vs. ‘New’ Inter-regional Cooperation and ASEM’s Prospects” (Working Paper no.22, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000); Julie Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (Electronic Working Papers, School of East Asia Studies, vol.1, no.1, University of Sheffield, 2002, <213.207.94.236/files/gilson_DefiningInterRegionalism.pdf>, accessed 4 March 2008); Doidge, “Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism” (2007): 220-48.

¹⁸ Song, “Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance” (2007): 67-8.

¹⁹ Doidge, “Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism” (2007): 220-48; Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism - Patterns of Engagement* (2011), 48-52; see also Jürgen Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (Paper presented in *Conference on the EU in International Affairs*, National Europe Centre, Australian National University, 3-4 July, 2002): 1-2.

theoretically-deduced functions, namely balancing (both power and institution), rationalising of international cooperation/governance and agenda-setting for multilateral regime. Due to the difficulty in measuring abstract conditions such as the increase in *regionness* or in trust between actors, assessment of functions like regional identity building and bandwagon was not available. These assessments reached similar conclusion: ASEM was a mere talk-shop, unable to delivery anything tangible and had missed the opportunity to make contribution.²⁰ Interestingly, no reason was given to explain why ASEM still attracts new members or still gains support from its partners.

In order to understand what ASEM can truly offer to its partners and the wider world, this dissertation suggests, to first identify the actual actors in the process, in which region is presumed not as a key one. Empirical data are applied; subsequently, this research illustrates what ASEM can offer as well as the reasons for new comers to join the process.

Furthermore, the existing studies on ASEM have discussed the correlations between ASEM with other IR processes. The birth of ASEM was attributed to globalisation, regionalism, regionalisation and the rise of the Triadic regions.²¹ On the other hand,

²⁰ Christopher M. Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations," *Pacific Affairs* 74, no.1 (2001): 41; Lay Hwee Yeo, "Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation," *Asia Europe Journal* 2 (2004): 21-8; University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward, An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities* (European Background Study, 2006), 10-11; "Crisis upgrades Asia-Europe Meeting", *Bangkok Post*, 23 October 2008; "Opportunity to unite or a talking shop?", *South China Morning Post*, 24 October 2008; "Time for new rules to guide world economy", *Strait Times*, 26 October 2008; Lay Hwee Yeo, "Summary of Roundtable Discussions," in *The Asia-Europe Meeting, Engagement, Enlargement and Expectations*, Lay Hwee Yeo and Wilhelm Hofmeister eds. (EU Centre in Singapore and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2010), 109.

²¹ H änggi, "Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives," (2000): 11-12; Jürgen R üland, "ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (*ZEI Discussion Papers*: 2001, C95): 5; R üland, "Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda" (2002): 3; R üland, "The EU as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global

ASEM was expected to be a catalyst for regionalism and multilateralism.²² Several scholars argued that ASEM would help preventing unilateralism of the US.²³ However, the correlation between bilateral state-to-state interaction and inter-regionalism was largely overlooked. Chapter 7 specifically fills this gap and illustrates the significance of bilateral state-to-state relations in the ASEM process. This dissertation analyses the co-existence of bilateralism and inter-regionalism in ASEM partners' toolbox of external relations.

1.4. Definition of key concepts

The concept of inter-regionalism is largely derived from regionalism and regionalisation. Therefore, to understand the former, relevant concepts like regionalism, regionalisation, global governance, institutionalisation, international

Governance from Europe's Relations with Asia" (2002): 1; Rüländ, "Interregionalism in International Relations" (2002): 2; Christopher M. Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 1 (2003): 227; Michael Reiterer, "The new regionalism and regional identity building: a lesson from the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (CHIR *Conference on Regional Integration and Cooperation*, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 17 September 2004); Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 213-28; Fredrik Söderbaum and Luk van Langenhove, "Introduction: The EU as an Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism," in *The EU as a Global Player: The Politics of Interregionalism*, Fredrik Söderbaum and Luk van Langenhove eds. (London: Routledge, 2006), 8-9; Heiner Hänggi, "Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon: In search for a typology," in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, Hänggi *et al.* eds. (2006), 31.

²² Dent applied "multilateral utility" to analyse how various levels and types of international relations would work in a congruent, coordinative and cooperative manner, and hence contribute to the global multilateral governance, in Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 213-28. See also Vinod K. Aggarwal and Edward Fogarty, "Explaining Trends in EU Interregionalism," in *European Union Trade Strategies: Between Globalism and Regionalism*, Vinod K. Aggarwal and Edward Fogarty eds. (London: Palgrave, 2004), 339-93; Chen, "NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order" (2005): 375.

²³ Gerald Segal, "Thinking strategically about ASEM: the subsidiarity question," *The Pacific Review* 10, no.1 (1997): 127-8; Rüländ, "Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda" (2002): 12; Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 230, 233; Dent, "ASEM and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 222-3; Aggarwal and Fogarty, "Explaining Trends in EU Inter-regionalism" (2004), 380; Rüländ, "Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism," (2010): 1274.

actors, *actorness* of international actors and the level of international actors have to be clarified.

1.4.1 Region, regionalism and regionalisation Compared to inter-regionalism, regionalism and regionalisation are much older and better defined concepts in IR study. Nye defined region as ‘a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship by a degree of mutual interdependence’,²⁴ while Hänggi *et al.* defined region as a ‘geographical area consisting of independent states which pursue shared economic, social and political values and objectives.’²⁵ Accordingly, regionalism can be understood as the process in which a group of independent states within the same region intentionally integrate with political will behind. Regionalisation, on the other hand, refers to the process in which a number of independent states within the same region unintentionally integrate, mainly as a result of intensive economic interactions.

1.4.2. Global governance Like other research on inter-regionalism, this dissertation mentions frequently the term ‘global governance’. It is understood as ‘a system interlocking institutions, which regulate the behaviour of states and other international actors in different issue areas of world politics’, as suggested by Rittberger and Bruhle.²⁶

1.4.3. Institutionalisation Similar to global governance, the term ‘institutionalisation’ is mentioned frequently in this dissertation. It comes from the

²⁴ Joseph Nye, *International Regionalism* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1968), vii.

²⁵ Hänggi *et al.*, “Interregionalism: A new phenomenon in international relations” (2006), 4.

²⁶ Volker Rittberger and Tanja Bruhle, “From International to Global Governance: Actors, Collective Decision-making, and the United Nations in the World of the Twenty-first Century,” in *Global Governance and the United Nations System*, Volker Rittberger ed. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001), 2.

term ‘institution’. After reviewing the definitions of ‘institution’ in economics, political science and sociology, Nelson and Sampat highlighted the concepts ‘widespread habits of action’ suggested by Veblen as well as ‘the way the game is played’ proposed by Schotter.²⁷ They added that institution ought to ‘have a certain flexibility so as to be applicable in a range of specific context and meet a variety of specific needs’, then, they suggested that ‘institutions are “rules of the game” when these are regarded as defining relatively closely what people do when they play the game.’²⁸ Following this definition, this research takes ‘institutionalisation’ as ‘a process to develop common rules to govern behaviours of the actors involved in an interactive framework’.

1.4.4. Inter-regionalism There have been numerous attempts to define inter-regionalism.²⁹ Some scholars provided simple definitions to inter-regionalism. Söderbaum and van Langenhove used ‘the condition or process whereby two regions interact as regions’;³⁰ whereas Reiterer stated that ‘inter-regionalism refers to an arrangement between two regionalisms, either contractual or *de facto*’.³¹ Yeo defined

²⁷ Richard R. Nelson and Bhaven N. Sampat, “Making sense of institutions as a factor shaping economic performance,” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 44 (2001): 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Hänggi, “Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives” (2000): 3-8; Rüland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 2; Dent, ‘From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges of ASEM’ (2003): 223-235; Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 309; Hänggi, “Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon: in search of a typology” (2005): 31-62; Söderbaum and van Langenhove, “Introduction: The EU as an Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism” (2006), 9.

³⁰ Söderbaum and van Langenhove, “Introduction: The EU as an Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism” (2006), 9.

³¹ Michael Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (paper presented at the Third Conference of the European Union Studies Association Asia-Pacific, Tokyo, 8-10 December 2005): 1.

inter-regionalism as ‘institutionalise relations between two regions’.³² To Roloff, inter-regionalism is ‘a process of widening and deepening political, economic, and societal interactions between international regions.’³³ These definitions pre-assumed regions as international actors. In contrast, Chen defined inter-regionalism as ‘institutions or organisations which promote dialogue and cooperation between countries in different regions’, seeing countries, instead of region, as the basic acting unit.³⁴

Hänggi’s five-type categorisation of inter-regional relations basing on the types of actors involved has been the most detailed and well-developed. His typology covers all possible forms of inter-regionalism mentioned in existing works: Type 1 was relation between a regional organisation/group and a third country; Type 2 was relation between two regional organisations; Type 3 referred to relation between a regional organisation and a regional group; Type 4 was relation between two regional groups; and Type 5 was relation among groups of states from more than two core groups.³⁵ Relations between two regional organisations, Type 2, represented the ideal case. Type 1 and Type 5 referred to the borderline cases, hence were only counted as inter-regional relations in the wider sense. Hänggi also called Type 1 and Type 5 ‘quasi-inter-regionalism’ and ‘mega-regionalism’ respectively.³⁶ His Type 2, Type 3

³² Lay Hwee Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process,” *European Studies* 25 (2007): 174.

³³ Ralf Roloff, “Interregionalism in theoretical perspective: state of art,” in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, Hänggi *et al.* eds. (2006), 18.

³⁴ Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order” (2005): 364.

³⁵ Hänggi, “Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon” (2006): 31-62; see also Hänggi, “Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives” (2000): 3-8.

³⁶ Hänggi, “Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon” (2006): 54.

and Type 4 covered what most other scholars called inter-regionalism or pure inter-regionalism. His Type 5 corresponds to what some others called trans-regionalism. Noteworthy, most scholars did not agree with Hänggi on recognising relations between a regional grouping and a single power as inter-regionalism.³⁷

Moreover, Hänggi introduced the classification of ‘old’ and ‘new’ inter-regionalism. While the old ones centre the EU, new inter-regional relations are no longer EU-centric but include all regions in the world.³⁸ He argued further that old inter-regionalism was ‘actor-centred’ (that is dominated by a few regional organisations especially the then European Community) while the new one was ‘system-centred’ (that is inter-regionalism became part of the international system and all countries in the world, regardless whether they are part of a regional organisation or not, could take part).³⁹ Hänggi saw that ‘system-centred’ inter-regionalism was a result of the systemic changes of the international relations, namely globalisation and regionalisation after the end of bi-polar world order. Generally, new inter-regional links would be informal, weakly institutionalised with diffuse membership and multi-layered which brought state and non-state actors together.

Similarly, Rüländ divided the interactions between regions into ‘older bilateral

³⁷ Mathew Doidge, “From Developmental Regional to Developmental Interregionalism? The European Union Approach,” *NCRE Working Paper No.07/01* (National Centre for Research on Europe, 2007); Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order” (2005): 361-78; Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002); Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002):1; Rüländ, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001).

³⁸ Hänggi, “Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives” (2000): 12; see also Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad” (1999): 56-80.

³⁹ Hänggi, “Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon: In search for a typology” (2006): 32-38.

inter-regionalism' and 'nascent forms of trans-regionalism'.⁴⁰ The former referred to those inter-regional institutions established in the 1970s which were mostly pure 'group-to-group dialogues with more or less regular meetings centring around exchanges of information and cooperation in specific policy fields.'⁴¹ These links were only weakly institutionalised. The relation between the European Community and the ASEAN was named as one example. In contrast, nascent form of trans-regionalism referred to those frameworks that had a more diffuse membership, which emerged in the 1990s. Rüländ saw the potential in these trans-regional institutions to develop their independent organisational infrastructure and hence independent *actorness*, he named APEC and ASEM as examples.⁴²

Dent agreed with the differentiation between inter-regionalism and trans-regionalism. He defined inter-regionalism as the 'relationship between two distinct, separate regions', distinguishing it from trans-regionalism which he referred to as an 'establishment of common "spaces" between and across regions in which constituent agents operate and have close associative ties with each other.'⁴³

Highlighting the differences between inter-regionalism and trans-regionalism, Gilson

⁴⁰ Rüländ, "ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 5-6; Rüländ, "Interregionalism in International Relations" (2002): 1-15.

⁴¹ Rüländ, "ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 5; see also Rüländ, "The European Union as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe's Relations with Asia" (2002): 1-2.

⁴² According to Rüländ, *actorness* refers to the 'capacities of regional organisations to become identifiable, to aggregate interests, formulate goals and politicise, make and implement decisions'. See Rüländ, "ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 6 and Jürgen Rüländ, "Transregional Relations: The Asia-Europe Meeting- A Functional Analysis" (Paper prepared for the International Conference *Asia and Europe on the Eve of 21st Century*, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 19-20 August 1999). Notably, Hettne preferred the term 'actorship', see Hettne, "Regional Governance and Global Order" (2005): 111.

⁴³ Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism: Future challenges for ASEM?" (2003): 224.

described the former as ‘explicitly sets one region in dialogue (or potentially a conflict) with an “other”’ and the later as a ‘structural attempt to combine a range of states within a coherent unified framework.’⁴⁴

To Yeo, trans-regionalism was one form of inter-regionalism which she termed as ‘hybrid inter-regionalism’, in which ‘two “regions” that relate to each other may not be clearly defined, membership is more diffuse and may not coincide neatly with [any] regional organisations.’⁴⁵ On the other end of the spectrum stood ‘pure inter-regionalism’ in which ‘two defined regional entities interact with each other’.⁴⁶

The most recent attempt to define inter-regionalism was a research of Rignér and Söderbaum, which devoted to ‘map’ the EU-related inter-regionalism.⁴⁷ They distinguished between ‘pure-inter-regionalism’ (an institutional framework between two clearly identifiable regions), ‘hybrid inter-regionalism’ (where one organised region negotiated with a group of countries from another unorganised or dispersed region), and ‘trans-regionalism’ (region-to-region relations where both regions were dispersed and had weak actorship).⁴⁸

In sum, the acting unit and the level of institutionalisation appeared as two crucial factors in the definition of inter-regionalism. A majority of works considered

⁴⁴ Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 2; see also Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 309.

⁴⁵ Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process” (2007): 174-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 174.

⁴⁷ Helena Rignér and Fredrik Söderbaum, “Mapping Inter-regionalism” (*Changing Multilateralism: the EU as a Global-regional Actor in Security and Peace Working Paper no.4*, 2010).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 2-3.

interaction involving a united regional group in one side as inter-regionalism, whereas interaction between two groups without clear *regionness* was defined as trans-regionalism. Trans-regionalism involves a higher level of institutionalisation than inter-regionalism. As underscored by the aforementioned scholars, trans-regionalism often included establishment of an independent institutional framework while inter-regional did not. Table 1.1 lists the different definitions of inter-regional and trans-regional interactions by different scholars.

Table 1.1: Summary of definitions of interaction among regions or actors from different regions (‘×’ means ‘nothing was mentioned by the particular scholar’.)

	RO-RO	RO-RG	RG-RG	States form 2 or more regions	RO/RG-state	
Dent	Inter-regionalism between two distinct regions			Trans-regionalism	×	
Söderbaum & van Langenhove	region-to-region relations			×		
Gilson	Interactions between two regions			Trans-regionalism		
Reiterer	Relations between two regionalisms			×		
Rüland	Old bilateral inter-regionalism or called ‘bi-regionalism’			New trans-regionalism		
Yeo	Pure inter-regionalism			Hybrid inter-regionalism		
Rignér & Söderbaum	Pure inter-regionalism	Hybrid inter-regionalism	Trans-regionalism		×	
Hänggi	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 1	
	Ideal case	Inter-regional		Mega-regional	Quasi-inter-regional	
	Covered by old inter-regionalism		Not covered	Covered by old inter-regionalism		
	Covered by new inter-regionalism					
This dissertation	Pure inter-regionalism			Inter-regionalism in loose sense (two indistinct regions)	Asymmetric bilateralism	

After consulting the works of various scholars, this dissertation follows the majority and considers relations between two regional organisations (RO-RO), between a regional organisation and a distinct regional group (RO-RG), and between two

distinct regional groups (RG-RG) as ‘pure inter-regionalism’. Interaction between actors from two indistinct regions would be referred to as inter-regionalism in loose sense. The relations with a regional group/organisation on one side and a single state on the other (e.g. EU-Japan or ASEAN-China) are not considered as inter-regionalism but ‘asymmetric bilateral relation’.⁴⁹

1.4.5. Defining ASEM While many existing studies on ASEM defined it as inter-regionalism or simply took ASEM as an example of inter-regionalism for granted,⁵⁰ some research considered it as trans-regionalism or multilateralism. Yeo preferred the term ‘hybrid inter-regionalism’.⁵¹ Ponjaert defined ASEM as ‘heterogeneous inter-regionalism’, which referred to a regional organisation (the EU) dealing with a regional group (the East Asian countries).⁵² Rüländ, Doidge and

⁴⁹ The term is coined by Camroux, see David Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetrical Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism,” *Cahiers européens de Sciences Po* 4 (2006).

⁵⁰ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM” (1997), 1-20; Christopher M. Dent, “The ASEM: Managing the new framework of the EU’s economic relations with East Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* 70, no. 4 (1997/1998): 495-516; Richards and Kirkpatrick, “Reorienting Interregional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe’s East Asian Policy” (1999): 683-710; Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella complex’ of EU-East Asia economic relations” (2001): 25-53; Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 1-9; Heiner Hänggi, “Regionalism through interregionalism”, in *Regionalism in East Asia and ASEM: Paradigm shifting?*, Fu-Kuo Liu and Philippe Rénier eds. (London: Routledge, 2003), 197-219; César de Prado Yepes, “The effect of ASEM on European foreign Policies,” *Asia Europe Journal* 3 (2005): 25-35; Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order” (2005): 372; Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 307-26; Hänggi, “Inter-regionalism as a multifaceted phenomenon” (2006): 31-62; Juha Jokela and Bart Gaens, “Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM,” *Asia Europe Journal* 10 (2012): 145-64.

⁵¹ Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process” (2007): 175.

⁵² Frederik Ponjaert, “Cross-regional Dynamics: Their Specific Role and Contribution to Global Governance Efforts within the International System”, in *European Union and Asia. A Dialogue on Regionalism and Interregional Cooperation*, Reimund Seidelmann and Vasilache Andreas eds. (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), 177-96.

Loewen classified ASEM as trans-regionalism.⁵³ In this dissertation, when ASEM first began with the EU (a regional organisation) on one side and a group of states from East Asia (a regional group, known as ASEAN+3) on the other, it was classified as a pure inter-regionalism.

The categorisation of ASEM became even more difficult after its four rounds of enlargement. On the Asian side, the enlargement to six non-ASEAN+3 countries (India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Australia, New Zealand and Russia) diluted the distinctiveness of the Asian partners as a single group. Noteworthy, Russia, Australia and New Zealand first applied to join the European side of ASEM but were rejected. They finally joined as ‘Temporary Third Category’ in 2010; then in 2012, they were accepted into ASEM’s Asian group. Geographically, Russia sits on both Asia and Europe whereas Australia and New Zealand locate in the Pacific between East Asia and the Atlantic. In terms of culture, language and value, Australia and New Zealand share much more similarities with European countries, especially the UK, than with Asian countries like China, Mongolia or Thailand. The case of Russia is even more complicated as it historically and culturally ties with both Europe and Asia. Still, Western Russia which locates in Europe has been more developed and populated than the Eastern part of Russia in Asia. The regional identity of these three countries is unclear (or flexible viewing from a positive angle). To further complicate the situation, Norway and Switzerland, who are not part of the EU, became full ASEM European members in the ninth summit. Subsequently, the *regionness* of the

⁵³ Rüländ, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 3; Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 3; Howard Loewen, “ASEM’s Enlargement- state-to-state or region-to-region dialogue?”, in *The Asia-Europe Meeting, Engagement, Enlargement and Expectations*, Yeo and Hofmeister eds. (2010), 25; Doidge, *The European Union and Interregionalism - Patterns of Engagement* (2011), 113-43.

European side may also be diluted.

The expansion to non-ASEAN+3 and non-EU European countries blurred the inter-regional feature of ASEM. Consequently, this dissertation suggests that ASEM is shifting away from pure inter-regionalism to loser form of inter-regionalism or even to trans-regionalism. Chapter 4 to Chapter 9 explore this shift in more details as well as the type(s) of interaction(s) which ASEM embraces.

1.4.6. Actorness of international actor Another concept defined here is the *actorness* of international actor. In his study of external role of the European Community (former EU), Sjöstedt suggested that an international actor needed to fulfil three basic conditions – discernible from others and its environment; autonomous; and structurally able to act at international level.⁵⁴ He used the term *actorness* as a synonym of ‘actor capability’.⁵⁵

Bretherton and Vogler explored the criteria for a global actor by examining the development of the EU’s role in global politics.⁵⁶ To them, an actor implied ‘an entity that exhibits a degree of autonomy from its external environment, and indeed from its internal constituents, and which is capable of volition or purposes.’⁵⁷ They highlighted that the state-centric approach in IR study failed to understand the uniqueness of the EU as an individual actor in global politics. Hence, they suggested applying the social constructivist approach to explain the ‘multi-actor global system’.

⁵⁴ Gunnar Sjöstedt, *The External Role of the European Community* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1977), 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁶ Bretherton and Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, (2006).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 15.

Accordingly they argued that a global actor required ‘domestic legitimization of decision processes and priorities relating to external policy’, ‘ability to identify priorities and formulate policies’ as well as ‘availability of and capacity to utilise, policy instruments’.⁵⁸ They equated *actorness* with ‘actor capability’,⁵⁹ hence defined *actorness* as the extent to which a global actor can ‘exploit opportunity’, ‘capitalise its presence’ as well as ‘formulate and implement external policy’.⁶⁰

While studying the role of regional organisations in world politics, Rüländ defined *actorness* as ‘the capacities of regional organisations to become identifiable, to aggregate interests, formulate goals and policies, make and implement decisions.’⁶¹ He underlined that the degree of supranationality was not directly proportional to the *actorness* of a regional or international organisation.⁶²

In their study of the role of the EU in global environmental governance, Vogler and Stephen defined a global actor as one who possessed ‘pre-existing presence’ in the international system as well as the ability ‘to make policy, to interact formally and informally with other actors in the international system and to exert influence in various ways including the use of policy instruments.’⁶³

⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*: 15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*: 211.

⁶¹ Rüländ, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 6; see also Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 10.

⁶² Jürgen Rüländ, “Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?”, in *Interregionalism and International Relations: A Stepping Stone to Global Governance?*, H änggi et al. eds (2006): 295-313.

⁶³ John Vogler and Hannes R. Stephen, “The European Union in global environmental governance: Leadership in the making?,” *International Environmental Agreement* 7 (2007): 392.

This dissertation combines the strength of the aforementioned studies and defines *actorness* of an international actor as the capability of an actor to (i) identify itself from the others; (ii) make independent decisions and (iii) take actions which exert influence globally. The actions taken and influence exerted should reach out to other regions in order to be considered international instead of regional.

1.4.7. Level of actor Nye suggested a functionally three-dimensional chess game to identify different ‘levels’ in world politics – unipolar military relations among states were on the top board, where the US had been the only superpower with ‘global reach’; the middle board were multipolar economic relations with the EU, the US and other big national powers; the bottom board was transnational relations outside the control of national governments (namely drugs, infectious diseases, climate changes and terrorism), in which power was ‘chaotically distributed among non-state actors’ and close civilian cooperation was crucial.⁶⁴

Camroux developed a four-level game paradigm from the two-level games (domestic and international politics) of Putnam as well as three-level game (domestic, intra-regional and international politics) of Patterson.⁶⁵ The fourth level added by Camroux was inter-regional relations. R üland and Yeo preferred a five-level model of policy-making in the ‘multilayered system of global governance’ – global; inter- and trans-regional; regional; sub-regional; and bilateral state-to-state relations.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Joseph S. Nye, “Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009, <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65163/joseph-s-nye-jr/get-smart?page=show> (accessed 4 March 2011).

⁶⁵ R üland, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 2.

⁶⁶ Lay Hwee Yeo, “Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM”, in *Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM Context: Current Dynamics and Theoretical Approach*, Lay Hwee Yeo

Combining the efforts of the aforementioned work, this research identifies five levels (or layers) of international relations to categorise various international actors (Table 1.2). The top is the international layer with intergovernmental organisations such as the UN and its agencies, followed by the inter-regional level where cooperative frameworks such as ASEM and East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) locate. Then, there are regional organisations at the regional level and the nation-states at national level. On the base, domestic level is added to cover the actors such as local business, local civil society organisations and the domestic public. Owing to the conceptual ambiguity between ‘region’ and ‘sub-region’, this study excludes the sub-regional level.

Table 1.2: Five levels of international relations where the actors originate

Levels	International actors	Examples
International	International organisations	UN, WTO
	Multinational corporations	McDonald’s, Royal Dutch Shell
	International NGOs	Green Peace, Red Cross
	Terrorists	the Taliban, Al Qaeda
Inter/trans-regional	Inter/trans-regional for a	ASEM, APEC
Regional	Regional organisations	EU, ASEAN, SAARC
National	Nation-states	China, India, Belgium, New Zealand
Domestic	Media	<i>CNN, BBC, Daily Yomiuri, le Monde, China Daily, Strait Times</i>
	National public	Chinese public, Indian public
	Community organisations ⁶⁷ , academic and research institutions, local companies	

and Lluç López i Vidal (Barcelona: CIDOB Foundation, no.23, 2008), 10; David Camroux, “Interregionalism or Merely a Fourth-Level Game? An Examination of the EU-ASEAN Relationship,” *East Asia* 27 (2010): 57-77.

⁶⁷ ‘Non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) has become increasingly used as collective term for civil society organisations. However, this study does not agree with this usage of ‘NGOs’ as the term refers also to actors such as MNCs, terrorist groups and educational institutions. This study persists in using the terms ‘civil society organisations’ and ‘community organisations’ as collective term for ‘autonomous non-profit and non-party/politically-unaffiliated organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development’. This definition referred to that introduced in NGO Monitor’s official website, <www.ngo-monitor.org/index.php> (accessed 7 November 2009).

Apart from these five levels of actors' origin, this research also distinguishes between states and non-state actors. State here refers to a territorial entity whose government has supreme power to create and regulate its own laws and affairs; in the international arena state enjoys unchallenged recognition of governing power over its own territory (or called sovereignty).⁶⁸ The emergence of the concept of sovereign states dated back to the sixteenth century.⁶⁹ Indicated by how it is named, non-state actors are actors who are not sovereign states.

1.5. Constraints

As a doctoral project, this research faces constraints in terms of finance, time and experience. First, this research is willing to incorporate more existing inter-regional fora as case-study in order to add a comparative element. After considering the time required to familiar with one inter-regional fora and the depth of the analysis, this research remained to focus on ASEM, one of the most advance models of inter-regionalism. ASEM is a comprehensive case-study with its vast and diverse membership, multi-track and multi-dimensional approaches. This research explores ASEM comprehensively instead concentrating to a single issue area. Although time-consuming, this approach is preferred because ASEM itself is a multi-dimensional dialogue. If there would be more time and resource available, this research could extend to include other inter-regional and trans-regional cooperative frameworks, namely APEC, FEALAC and EU/Latin America and Caribbean Summit

⁶⁸ William Nester, *International Relations* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 95; Robert Jackson and George Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2; Joshua S. Goldstein, *International Relations*, sixth edition (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 10.

⁶⁹ Jackson and Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations* (1999), 9; Goldstein, *International Relations* (2005), 10, 27-33.

(EU-LAC) and establish a comparative study.

Second, this dissertation focuses mainly on endogenous factors which affect an inter-regional cooperative framework, namely the types and roles of actors involved in the ASEM process and ASEM's institutional design. The roles of exogenous factors (such as influence from a third party or changes happen in wider international relations) and of domestic factors (namely how domestic politics affect the preferences and ability of a government in handling external relations) are only briefly touched upon. This research serves as a starting point for the development of a broader model to cover all endogenous, exogenous and domestic factors on inter-regionalism. Further studies can build upon its results.

To strengthen the validity of this research, a variety of data collection and analysis methods are applied (a detailed explanation of the methodology is in Chapter 3). The application of statistics to understand social science does not mean that this research complies with positivism. Instead, it follows post-positivism, that is, this research recognises the essentiality of scientific reasoning while being aware of the possible errors resulted from biased of the author's choice of samples, world views, cultural background and so on. In order to reduce subjectivity, this research includes as many data collection and analysis methods as possible. Random sampling is also adopted. In addition, as much works by other scholars on inter-regionalism and ASEM are consulted as possible.

1.6. Structure and content of the research

Thus far, several issues are repeatedly addressed in the existing studies of inter-regionalism, whilst other aspects have been overlooked: the involvement of

non-state actors, the types of interaction between partners, the interaction between actors at different levels, as well as the actual achievements of inter-regional fora are a few to name. They are explored in details in this research. Furthermore, existing studies of ASEM sometimes create confusion or misunderstanding about the process, for example, viewing ASEM just as a collection of summits, requesting ASEM to perform as a delivery mechanism, or calling ASEM a pure inter-regionalism. This research clarifies ASEM's original objectives and true characteristics.

The research questions posed are: 'which actors are involved in inter-regionalism'; 'how do the actors manage their relations in an inter-regional forum?'; 'how would the founding states' design of ASEM impact on the distribution of power between state and non-state actors?'; 'what ASEM can offer to the wider international relations?'; 'Can ASEM create new types of international actors?'; and eventually 'how does the rise of inter-regionalism influence the actors in the international arena and vice-versa?'

These questions are addressed in the following eight chapters. Chapter 2 first overviews the IR theories used in the existing studies on inter-regionalism and ASEM, then introduces the theoretical framework developed by this research. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of data collection and data analysis, as well as the uniqueness and originality of such methodology. Chapter 4 consists of an overview of the historical background which led to the creation of ASEM as well as a brief summary of the highs and lows between ASEM1 and ASEM9.

Entering the empirical part, Chapter 5 analyses in depth the institutional design of ASEM. Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 examine what has happened in different

tracks (both official and unofficial) of the ASEM process from 1996 to 2012. These three chapters explore also the interactions between the key actors in the process and whether ASEM can become an independent international actor on its own. The final chapter concludes the findings of the research, provides detailed answers to the research questions and elaborates how these findings contribute to the theories of IR.

Chapter Two

Theoretical frameworks in the study of inter-regionalism

2.1. Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the proliferation of inter-regional fora stimulated theoretical discussions on inter-regionalism. Among the established inter-regional interactions, ASEM which is seen as one of the most advanced examples, has received significant academic attention.⁷⁰ This chapter first overviews the International Relations theories typically used in the studies of inter-regionalism and of the ASEM process. In particular, this chapter illustrates how the three main IR theories – realism, liberal-institutionalism and social constructivism – have been used to analyse inter-regional interactions. A few other theoretical approaches which were applied by individual scholars are also covered.

For decades, scholars and students of IR have been busy building, understanding, criticising and defending various theories. Different schools of thoughts focus on various issues, from the nature of international relations to the role of material interests versus that of ideas, to the goals and behaviours of individual actors. None of the aforementioned paradigms has gained universal support. This research examines the validity of the three main IR theories by examining their explanatory power regarding the ASEM case.

⁷⁰ See footnote 6 in Chapter 1.

2.2. Overview of three main IR theories and their views on international actors

The existing studies on inter-regionalism covered a variety of elements including the definition, *raison d'être*s, motivation behind the participation of individual partners, structure, operational mechanisms and the potential functions. In the ASEM case, the *raison d'être*s, potential functions, operation mechanism and assessment have received more academic attention. In general, three main IR schools of thought were more frequently used: realism, liberal institutionalism and social constructivism. However, these existing theoretical discussions focused extensively on the potential functions of the ASEM process.

Each of these three major IR theories has its distinct view and definition of actors in the international arena. In particular, the on-going debate between realism and liberalism has yet found a consensus on what constitute the basic units (or the primary actors) of international relations. The main points of contention are: will state be eternally classified as dominant actor on the international stage; can international and regional institutions become main players; and whether changes of international identity and reality can eventually create new agents in international relations. Below is a brief summary of the key arguments of each of the three main schools of thought.

2.2.1. Realism⁷¹ Realists see international politics, unlike the domestic politics inside one state, as in anarchy that there is no superior power above states to control their

⁷¹ This section summarise works from scholars including Edward H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth N. Waltz: Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: an introduction to the study of international relations*, second edition (London: Macmillan, 1946); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, state and war: a theoretical analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); J. Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, *Politics among Nations*, sixth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985); Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs* 44 (1990): 21-37; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Realism and International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Other references include Michel E. Brown, Owen R. Coté and Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller eds., *Theories of War and Peace: an international security reader* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998);

interactions. Under such anarchy, nation-states are the main actors in the international arena. They inevitably distrust each other. The realist school places emphasis on the balance of power among sovereign-states who are deemed to be rational as well as unitary actors. All states are seen as identical in function, but different in terms of their material capacity to fulfil those functions. ‘Rational’ implies that states would use any reasonable means to maximise their national interests, as well as their power.⁷² ‘Unitary’ assumes that each state is a single actor with a united voice whereas sub-national actors, namely private corporations and civil society groups play only minimal roles in international politics.⁷³ To realists, all non-state actors, such as international and regional institutions, trans-national corporations and civil society organisations, play merely supplementary roles in IR. These non-state actors are seen as unable to change the basic power structure in international relations.

According to realism, the ultimate and most crucial national interests of every nation-state are security and survival, which would never change. Hence, states must be constantly prepared for conflicts by equipping themselves well economically and militarily. In realists’ terms, security and survival are ‘zero-sum games’ (one side gains at the cost of the other side’s loss, an opposite concept to ‘positive-sum games’),⁷⁴ therefore each state has to maximise national interests and acquire power

Frederick G. Whelan, *Hume and Machiavelli, Political Realism and Liberal Thought* (Oxford, Lexington Books, 2004); Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, third edition (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁷² John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, 19, no.3 (1994-5): 10; Goldstein, *International Relations* (2005), 68-71.

⁷³ Goldstein, *International Relations* (2005), 68-71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 71; Stanley Hoffmann, “Notes on the Elusiveness of Modern Power,” *International Journal* 30 (1975): 183-206; Robert Gilpin, *US. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 22-25, 34.

to survive. In a zero-sum game, realists calculate relative gains rather than absolute gains; consequently, sovereign-states worry about how the gains from cooperation are distributed and persistently fear unequal distribution. As a result, they distrust one another and only opt for cooperation when it suits national interests. Cooperation, including inter-regional cooperation, is deemed to be in an *ad-hoc* manner and short-term. In other words, realists do not believe that any international, trans-national or regional organisations can establish an independent long existence. Scholars such as Strange see international organisations just as an instrument for nation-states to act in pursuit of their national interests.⁷⁵

2.2.2. Liberal institutionalism⁷⁶ The second school of IR theory that appears frequently in the literature of inter-regionalism is liberal institutionalism (LI). Generally, liberalism underscores the complex interdependence between actors in the international arena.⁷⁷ A consequence of this complex interdependence is that when problems arise, they are often too complicated and large for any single state to tackle alone. Hence, states increasingly look for cooperation, either actively or passively, while inter-regional cooperation serves as one option. Through cooperation within

⁷⁵ Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, "Why States Act through Formal International Organisations," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no.1 (1998): 3-32; see also Rüländ, "The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe's Relations with Asia" (2002): 1.

⁷⁶ This section summarises works of scholars including Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye and Michale Doyle: Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye eds., *Transnational relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and the World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no.4 (1986): 1151-69; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition*, second edition (Glenview, Scott, Foresman, 1989); Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51 (1997): 513-53. Other references include Whelan, *Hume and Machiavelli, Political Realism and Liberal Thought* (2004); Burchill *et al.*, *Theories of International Relations* (2005).

⁷⁷ Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (1989).

institutional frameworks, states can broaden their interests or solve problems which require collaborative action from other actors on the international stage.

In cooperation, liberalism focuses on absolute collective gains instead of relative ones. Thus, cooperation which brings joint-benefit, enhances the welfare of people and minimises violent conflict is preferred over competition. Cooperation among nation-states and the building of trans-national regimes are made possible once common interests and mutual goals are recognised. Due to the high cost of construction and even higher cost for re-construction, once created, an international institution tends to persist and last for a long time, although changes are inevitable during the development.

It is assumed that a multilateral institution formed will be more than the sum of its constituent parties, and need to be treated as an individual actor. The role of international and regional institutions in global politics is crucial in liberalism. LI emphasises the role of cooperative institutions to make cooperation possible. These institutions provide members with information, opportunity for reciprocal treatments and mechanism to punish the actors who fail to fulfil the agreement. Cooperative institutions also serve as a framework that shape states' expectations. Gradually, a sense of continuity in cooperative arrangements is built, and eventually participants are willing to resolve conflicts without violence. However, the expansion and proliferation of multilateral institutions may lead to the diminishing roles of nation-states.

In contrast to realism, the liberal school argues that states are not necessarily rational and unitary. Some components of a state can act trans-nationally which make

national-borders blurred and hamper the effectiveness of nation-state ruling. Liberalism also recognises the independence and significance of non-state actors – international and regional institutions, civil society organisations, lobbying groups, multinational corporations (MNCs) as well as individuals– in the international realm. In particular, the significance of international institutions in fostering inter-state cooperation is highlighted. Yet, the importance of nation-states is not totally denied. A liberalist international system is one in which states and non-state actors co-exist.

Instead of power, culture and the domestic society structure determine the behaviours of actors; for instance, liberalism believes that democratic and capitalist states tend to be more peaceful and seldom fight with one another.⁷⁸ Concerning states' interactions, liberalism views economic and cultural fields as significant as the traditional high politics which comprise political and security fields.

During the constructions of the web-like trade and investment relations globally, actors including nation-states find themselves increasingly dependent on one another. This also implies high vulnerabilities which largely reduce the tendency of states to start a war. In particular, institutions which facilitate state-to-state cooperation are seen as crucial elements in managing international relations. In order to manage the complex interdependence between actors, cooperative effort is required in all policy fields.

⁷⁸ Richard Rosecrance, "The Rise of the Trading State," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no.4 (1996): 45-61; Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics" (1986): 1151-69.

2.2.3. Social constructivism⁷⁹ While the fight between realism and liberalism lasted decades, social constructivism only joined the debate in the 1990s. The constructivist school emphasises the mutual constituting characteristic between agents and structures. Ideas play a crucial role in constructivism: ideas comprise goals, threats, fears, identities and any perception which affects the actors in the international system. It challenges the realist and liberal-institutionalist perspectives which ignore the ideational factors, and suggests that both normative and material structures play a role.

Social constructivism shares some assumptions with the realist school, namely the existence of anarchy and the central role of nation-states in the international system. Yet, actors who exert influence on the construction of identity are also relevant. Unlike realism, which focuses purely on material powers, social constructivism emphasises the importance of both material and normative structures, especially the latter. Particularly, the notion of ‘identity’ – which is believed to be shaped by both ideas and material structures, informs the interests and thus actions of actors – occupies central role.⁸⁰ Social constructivists argue that the identity of the agents informs their behaviour in international relations, including inter-regional ones. Norms play a significant additional role.

Based upon *intersubjectivity*, the identity of agents and structure of the international

⁷⁹ This section summarises works of scholars including Alexander Wendt and John Gerard Ruggie: Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it- the social construction of power politics,” *International Organization* 46, no.2 (1992): 391-425; John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the world polity: essays on international institutions* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998); Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no.2 (1994): 384-96.

⁸⁰ Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it- the social construction of power politics” (1992); John Gerard Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 855–885.

realm are formed and reformed continuously. Yet, due to an absence of complete information and lack of rationality of states as actors, social constructivists argue that the evaluation of costs and benefits rests substantially on cognitive factors. In other words, past experience and ideas shape perceptions of costs and benefits.

Regarding cooperation, including the inter-regional ones, constructivists believe that communication and social learning contribute to growing collectiveness, thus, making cooperation more feasible. Notably, constructivism introduces the idea of *socialisation* into international relations, in which agents learn to socialise during interaction with others. This learning process then shapes and reshapes the identity and interests of the agents, and eventually brings changes to the international system.

Unlike realism and liberalism, social constructivism does not pay much attention on the types of actors. Any relevant entity, or agent, is counted in the formation and reformation of themselves as well as the structure of international relations. Yet, it is commonly assumed that state-actors weigh more heavily than other actors due to their richer possession of material resources for actions.

Although several other theories have been pursued by certain scholars when studying inter-regionalism, the aforementioned three main IR theories dominate the mainstream studies. This dissertation, then, explores whether these conventional IR theories are able to explain inter-regionalism as a new development in the international realm. Also, it determines whether it is feasible and necessary to combine two or more of these theories to explain a single phenomenon.

2.3. Application of IR theories in the study of inter-regionalism and ASEM

When analysing inter-regionalism in general and the ASEM process in particular, scholars have applied different theories: while some of them insisted on a single school, others applied two in parallel; and there were even several scholars who combined three or more schools of thought. On the other hand, there are other scholars, such as Robles,⁸¹ who denied the applicability of existing IR theories to analyse ASEM and inter-regionalism. Generally, the existing literature demonstrates a popular trend of combining a few selected theories, especially neo-realism, liberal-institutionalism and social constructivism, to explain inter-regional interactions including the ASEM process.

Song was one of the scholars who concentrated his focus on a single IR theory. He argued that LI was the most suitable theoretical approach to examine inter-regionalism, since it highlighted the necessity of cooperation between regions which realism denied. In addition, he criticised social constructivist studies for limiting to intra-regional level.⁸² To Song, social constructivism had the potential to explain ASEM but not the present case because ASEM's 'effects of norm harmonisation on [the] participatory actors still takes time to observe'.⁸³ He went further to analyse ASEM through this single-theory approach, arguing that the ASEM process was the 'ideal case' of a rationally designed inter-regional cooperation to solve common problems. Another scholar, Gilson, preferred social constructivism and

⁸¹ Alfredo C. Robles, *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁸² Song, "Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance" (2007): 68-81.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 71.

concentrated on the potential influence of inter-regionalism on the intra-regional identities of the constituent agents through looking at the regionalism in East Asia in the ASEM process.⁸⁴ Richards, on the other hand, in his study of the role of civil society in ASEM, applied various branches of the liberal school namely neo-liberalism, liberal-pluralism and critical liberalism.⁸⁵

Other scholars, like Hänggi⁸⁶ and Roloff,⁸⁷ attempted to examine inter-regionalism by combining two IR theories (realism and LI), while others advocated a combination of the three dominant theoretical schools. From a post-positivist perspective, these scholars believed that no single theory alone could fully explain a complex phenomenon such as inter-regionalism and the case of ASEM.⁸⁸ Smith and Vichitsorasatra argued that the material (realism), ideational (social constructivism) and institutional (institutionalism) theoretical approaches were deeply intertwined.⁸⁹ Aggarwal *et al*⁹⁰ as well as Rüländ⁹¹ combined the three aforementioned IR theories

⁸⁴ Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 307-26; Gilson, *Asia meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002); Gilson, "Japan's Role in the Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an interregional or Intra-regional Agenda?" (1999): 736-52.

⁸⁵ Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below?: Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition" (1999): 146-70.

⁸⁶ Hänggi, "Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives" (2000): 9-13; Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad," (1999): 56-80.

⁸⁷ Roloff, "Interregionalism in theoretical perspective: state of art," (2006): 23-24; Quoted in *Ibid.*: 9.

⁸⁸ Söderbaum and van Langenhove, "Introduction: The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism" (2006), 4-5; Reiterer, "Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia" (2005): 5-18; Lay Hwee Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003); Maull and Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM" (2003): 237-48.

⁸⁹ Michael Smith and Natee Vichitsorasatra, "The European Union as a Foreign Policy Actor in Asia: Defining and Theorising EU-Asia Relations," *European Studies* 25 (2007): 118.

⁹⁰ Aggarwal and Fogarty, *European Union Trade Strategies: Between Globalism and Regionalism* (2004).

to understand why inter-regional relations were established. Yeo and Rüländ used the combination approach when studying ASEM.⁹²

Noteworthy, Muall and Okfen argued that theoretical insights were solely applicable to analyse the initiating motivations of an inter-regional institution but failed to account for its further development.⁹³ Their research illustrated the differences between the theoretically-deduced functions and the actual achievements of two inter-regional fora, APEC and ASEM. Consequently, they argued that none of the three conventional IR theories could explain the continuous support the participating partners gave to APEC and ASEM amid these fora had failed to achieve the expected functions. They suggested future studies to consider inter-regionalism as a ‘distinctive form of international diplomacy’ and to treat APEC and ASEM as ‘vehicles for soft politics’, then to ‘rethink the outcome-oriented theories of international cooperation’.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002); Rüländ, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002); Rüländ, “The European Union as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002); Rüländ, “Balancers, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builders? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1271-83.

⁹² Rüländ, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 1-37; Rüländ, “The European Union as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002); Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different Dimensions of ASEM* (2003), Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7; Mathew Doidge, ‘*East is East...*’ *Inter- and Transregionalism and the EU-ASEAN Relationship* (PhD thesis in Political Science, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, 2004); Rüländ, “Balancers, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builders? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1271-83; see also Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (2005); Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order” (2005): 362, 369-77; Alan Hardacre and Michael Smith, “The EU and the Diplomacy of Complex Inter-regionalism,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 4, no.2 (2009): 67-88.

⁹³ Muall and Okfen, “Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM” (2003): 237-49.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: 248.

There are a few scholars who refused to study inter-regionalism by applying any of the three conventional IR theories. Farrell criticised realism for failing to explain why nation-states gave up their sovereignty during cooperation.⁹⁵ She disagreed with the liberal-institutionalist view which treated international institutions as apolitical actors without self-interests. Subsequently, Farrell recommended the 'cooperative hegemon approach' which was introduced by Pedersen⁹⁶ to examine why the EU, as a collective entity, has engaged itself in inter-regional cooperation. She claimed that the cooperative hegemony approach was complementary to existing theoretical perspectives to account the EU's engagement in inter-regionalism, as such approach involved 'the use of soft power through engagement in cooperative arrangements linked to a long-term strategy.'⁹⁷ The existence of a hegemon, who ought to be a large national (or maybe regional) power with leadership skills, willing to commit in cooperation and share power with smaller states, were the crucial preconditions.⁹⁸ Once established, such cooperation would bring the whole community collective benefits, which were more attractive than the advantages that the constituent states could obtain individually. She listed the EU-ASEAN, EU-Latin America, EU-ACP inter-regional relationships as empirical evidences to demonstrate that the EU, as a global actor with 'soft power', has been employing a cooperative hegemony strategy. Subsequently, she argued that this approach was best used to explain the behaviour of hegemons in inter-regionalism. According to Farrell, the EU as a hegemon chose to

⁹⁵ Mary Farrell, "The EU and Inter-Regional Cooperation: In Search of Global Presence?" (UNU-CRIS e-working Papers W-2004/9, 2004): 2-5.

⁹⁶ Cooperative hegemony approach was first developed by Thomas Pedersen, see Thomas Pedersen, "Cooperative hegemony: power, ideas and institutions in regional integration," *Review of International Studies* 28, no.4 (2002): 677-696.

⁹⁷ Farrell, "The EU and Inter-regional Cooperation: In Search of Global Presence?" (2004): 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 7-10.

build a partnership and share power with its Asian partners in ASEM so as to counter-balance APEC and to reduce Asia's dependence on the US.⁹⁹ She added that the EU aimed at using ASEM to spread its institutional model to Asia as well as getting the Asian states to support its position in multilateral fora, namely the UN and the WTO.

Robles argued that the realist assumption of nation-state as unitary actor was in contradiction with inter-regionalism which involved supranational and international actors.¹⁰⁰ While seeing inter-regionalism as a facilitator of cooperation, he pointed out that realists denied cooperation as a possible solution for conflicts and the capability of states to socialise or learn. Furthermore, Robles argued that the regime theory, which is associated with LI, was self-contradicting and hence redundant to any analysis. Moreover, he named theoretical imprecision, the neglect of structural and material factors as well as the inability to explain the majority of functions of inter-regionalism as theoretical weaknesses of social constructivism. Subsequently, Robles denied the validity of social constructivism.

Another example was Cammack, who applied 'new materialism' which was Marxist in orientation, to assess the achievements of the ASEM process. He viewed ASEM as a managerial and problem-solving institution to resolve tensions generated from regional and global capitalism.¹⁰¹ The new materialist approach suggests that 'capitalist-oriented states seek collectively to preserve and constantly [to] extend the

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: 13-15.

¹⁰⁰ Robles, *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (2008), 11-12.

¹⁰¹ Paul Cammack, "Interregionalism and the new materialism," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no.1 (1999): 13-32.

general conditions for capital accumulation through multilateral institutions and other mechanisms of international and interregional coordination.’¹⁰² Yet, these capitalist-oriented states vary from each other in terms of development, domestic configuration, spatial location and hence interests. Cammack argued that ASEM was utilised by its member states to control global capitalist development on one hand, and to impose specific policies on their domestic societies on the other hand. He further suggested that instead of being displaced as key actor, states actually advanced their power through the creation of regional and interregional institutions.¹⁰³

Richards and Kirkpatrick studied the ASEM process as part of Europe’s East Asia policy by combining neo-liberalism and economic rationalism.¹⁰⁴ They claimed that the roles of nation-states in the international political economy were weakening and being replaced by regional institutions and multi-national corporations. However, their research had several limitations: first, it was conducted in 1999; second, it only covered the initial motivations behind the creation of ASEM; also, it only examined ASEM from the European perspective.

When examining what motivated the EU and its member states to join ASEM, Forster preferred to apply the ‘negotiated order approach’, which was developed by Smith in 1998.¹⁰⁵ The negotiated order approach hypothesises that each ‘world’ gives rise to a

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: 12.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: 15, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Richards and Kirkpatrick, “Reorienting Interregional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe’s East Asian Policy” (1999): 683-710.

¹⁰⁵ Anthony Forster, “Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 7, no.5 (2000): 787-805.

characteristic form of negotiation and there co-exist different worlds of negotiation.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, Forster argued that the dysfunction of ASEM was a result of the co-existence of various ‘worlds’. Each actor inside the EU, including the supranational institutions, individual member states and the EU itself, had its preferred partner region, fields of negotiation and means of interaction. In the ASEM case, Foster blamed the divergence of interests and divisions of power inside the EU for the impossibility in reaching any coherent policy.¹⁰⁷ Similar to Richards and Kirkpatrick’s research, Forster’s study of ASEM solely presented the European perspective.

In a recent work on the functions of inter-regional forum, Rūland introduced the ‘forum shopping’ paradigm, which was developed by Forman and Segaar, as well as ‘hedging’ which was coined by Kuik.¹⁰⁸ ‘Forum shopping’ denotes ‘a process by which actors pick and choose among the mechanisms that best fit their individual political agenda.’¹⁰⁹ ‘Hedging’ refers to the ‘two-pronged strategy simultaneously pursuing cooperative accommodation (engagement) and (soft military) balancing (containment).’¹¹⁰ By applying ‘forum shopping’ and ‘hedging’, Rūland concluded that institutional balancing as the principal function of inter-regional forum.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, Rūland only mentioned the two new paradigms briefly; application of

¹⁰⁶ Smith conceptualised ‘three worlds’ in the global arena comprising boundaries, layers and networks. Quoted from *Ibid.*: 788; see also *Ibid.*: 789, 798.

¹⁰⁷ Forster, “Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach,” (2000): 799.

¹⁰⁸ Rūland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism,” (2010): 1275.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*: 1280.

‘forum shopping’ or of ‘hedging’ was limited to the institutional balancing function of inter-regional fora.

There were a few attempts to develop new theories to explain inter-regionalism. Dent developed the theory of ‘multilateral utility’ (proactive contributions of interregional framework to foster stability, peace, prosperity and equality in the global system, in partnership with multilateral institutions)¹¹² and used it alongside neo-realism as well as social constructivism to analyse the potential functions of inter-regionalism.¹¹³ He attempted to illustrate the contributions of inter-regional frameworks to the global system. He argued that inter-regional frameworks could pro-actively connect nation-states and contribute to existing multilateral institutions. Eventually, inter-regional frameworks could further develop the multilateral orders or even develop new areas of governance. Dent explored also the preconditions and counter-conditions for multilateral utility.¹¹⁴ He then explored the multilateral utility of ASEM by addressing ‘what ASEM can intentionally contribute to the development of global society?’ and ‘what factors determine the multilateral utility of ASEM?’¹¹⁵

¹¹² Dent, “The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility,” (2004): 213-28. Dent coined the concept of *multilateral utility* to analyse how various levels and types of international relations may work in a congruent, coordinative and cooperative manner, and hence contribute to the global multilateral governance.

¹¹³ Dent, “From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM” (2003): 223-35; Dent, “The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism” (2004): 213-28; see also Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 25-53.

¹¹⁴ In brief, conditions favouring *multilateral utility* include the institutional capacity to coordinate and generate consensus among participants so as to project influence to multilateral institutions (in particular, legally binding and rule-based institutions serve this purpose better), the representational weight of members of the inter-regional framework in multilateral institution (the heavier the better) and the frequency of inter-regional framework connects itself to multilateral institutions (the more often the better). In contrary, the presence of close allegiance links of certain participants to states outside the inter-regional framework, institutional incapability and extremely diverse opinions/interests among participants would undermine multilateral utility.

¹¹⁵ Dent, “The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism” (2004): 217-26.

In sum, the majority of the existing literature about inter-regionalism applied at least one of the three conventional IR theories. Some of these works tried to demonstrate that the existing theories offered certain compelling visions and were able to predict the future. The majority applied the IR theories to deduce the potential functions of inter-regionalism and the motivations behind participants' joining. These works, however, largely neglected other aspects like the actual achievements and the growth, both in lifespan and membership, of the existing inter-regional fora.

Importantly, the existing inter-regionalism research which has applied realism has ignored certain key elements of the theory, particularly the identity of actors. They included all type of actors, ranging from international organisations to regional institutions, MNCs to sub-national community organisations. Also, the 'zero-sum game' paradigm is rarely mentioned. Furthermore, there is hardly any realist-inspired research that attempts to explain the continuation and expansion of many inter-regional institutions or the growing number of such arrangements. These aspects require further inquiry.

2.4. Actors in inter-regionalism deduced from the three IR theories

Realism limits the criteria for a relevant actor in international relations; accordingly, central actors are nation-states who inevitably compete over powers for national-interests and survival. Many existing realist analysis on inter-regionalism focuses on how the nation-states involved use inter-regional fora as vehicles to advance their respective interests, hence, enhance their power in the pursuit of relative gains over others in the international system. In particular, the neo-realists stress the use of inter-regionalism by a few strong national powers to strengthen their relative

national gains over others. It is assumed that states would only mandate a supranational institution when their national sovereignty is at threat. From a realist perspective, inter-regional relations would ‘simply reflect the state’s interests in an unstable interstate system.’¹¹⁶

On the other hand, liberalism admits non-states actors’ role in the international system, and treats them as independent global actors. In particular, institutions which facilitate state-to-state cooperation are seen as a crucial element in managing international relations. Scholars like Song, Aggarwal and Fogarty analysed ASEM from a LI perspective,¹¹⁷ seeing non-states actors such as regional organisations/groups as crucial actors in inter-regional fora. Rössler suggested that ‘relations between Asia and Europe are dominated by various regional actors, mainly EU and ASEAN.’¹¹⁸ Smith and Vichitsorasatra commented, ‘institutions are important in themselves, partly because they can shape processes and outcomes in both materialist and ideational perspectives...institutions can act as powerful expressions of norms and values and as shapers of patterns of communication and discourse.’¹¹⁹ Apart from the international and regional institutions, LI also recognises the significance of other

¹¹⁶ Dent, “The ASEM: Managing the New Framework of the EU’s Economic Relations with East Asia” (1997/8): 500.

¹¹⁷ Song, “Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance” (2007): 67-82; Aggarwal and Fogarty, *European Union Trade Strategies: Between Globalism and Regionalism* (2004); see also Ponjaert, “Cross-Regional Dynamics: Their Specific Role and Contribution to Global Governance Efforts within the International System” (2008): 177-96.

¹¹⁸ Jürg Rössler, “Eurasia: re-emergence of two world regions- the effects of interregionalism on regional integration,” *Asia Europe Journal* 7, no.2 (2009): 313-26.

¹¹⁹ Smith and Vichitsorasatra, “The European Union as a Foreign Policy Actor in Asia: Defining and Theorising EU-Asia Relations” (2007): 116.

non-state actors like civil society organisations and MNCs as independent actors in inter-regionalism.¹²⁰

As discussed above, Social constructivism is flexible with actors' type. Regarding inter-regionalism, constructivists focus mainly on how regional and inter-regional identities are created. Any actor, or agent, who takes part in the shaping of the world order is seen relevant. Still, regional organisations and their constituent member states have been more prominent actors in the existing works which pursued a constructivist approach. For instance, Gilson's research on inter-regionalism concentrated on the functional role of regions as actor in the management of global changes.¹²¹

After identifying the relevant actors in each theoretical approach, next session explores how these actors utilise inter-regionalism.

2.5. Functions of ASEM deduced from the three IR theories

Although ASEM has been continuously criticised as a mere 'talk shop',¹²² academic research thus far has accumulated a list of functions which ASEM is expected to fulfil. As mentioned before, existing studies on the ASEM process and inter-regionalism have devoted considerable attention to function-study, i.e. what can an inter-regional forum or grouping like ASEM offer to international relations. From the theoretical perspective, ASEM was described as 'multifunctional' and much more than

¹²⁰ For example: Luk van Langenhove and Ana-Cristina Costea, "Inter-regionalism and the Future Multilateralism" (*UNU-CRIS Occasional Paper*, 0-2005/13, 2005): 1-28.

¹²¹ Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002); Gilson, "Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (2002); Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005).

¹²² See footnote no.19.

mere-talking and photo-opportunities. Seven theoretically-deduced functions are widely discussed – three of those are deduced from realism (power balancing, institutional balancing among groupings/institutions created by nation-states and bandwagon among national powers); three from LI (institution-building of the multilateral regime, rationalising of international cooperation/governance and agenda-setting for multilateral regimes); identity-building for the constituting regions is the only function deduced from social constructivism.

The above functions have been explored in different studies and in different combinations. Some scholars concentrated on just one function, while others considered two or more. Rūland has consolidated these potential functions into a list.¹²³ Apart from these seven theoretically-deduced functions, a few other potential functions of ASEM have been mentioned sporadically. The section below explores these theoretically-deduced functions in greater detail.

2.5.1. Realism Existing realist analysis focuses on how nation-states interact and use inter-regional fora as vehicles to advance their respective interests, hence, enhance their power in the pursuit of relative gains (mainly material gains) over others in the international system. Realists believe that states would cooperate and even mandate a supranational institution to handle situations which would threaten their national sovereignty. In particular, the neo-realists stress the use of inter-regionalism by a few strong national powers to strengthen their relative national gains over others.

¹²³ Rūland, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001); Rūland, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002); Rūland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002); Rūland, “Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?” (2006): 295-313; Rūland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism,” (2010).

Generally from the realist perspective, inter-regionalism is a tool of its constituent states for balancing against other states or for bandwagon. The balancing function can be further divided into power balancing and institution balancing. Power balancing refers to the development of inter-regional links so as to restrict the abuse of power by a third parties (can be one states or a group of nation-states). Accordingly, inter-regionalism is one approach for individual states to cooperate together and balance against a superior power or threatening alliance in the international realm. For instance, it is argued that states like China, France and Germany join together under the ASEM framework to counterbalance the US.¹²⁴

Some scholars have extended the balancing idea to the regional level, arguing inter-regional fora like ASEM are used by regional powers to balance against each other. For example, Hänggi argued that the EU and East Asia aimed at checking the power of the US by creating ASEM.¹²⁵ He said ‘ASEM’s major purpose is to complete the uneven triangle of the macro-regions’ (North America, Asia and Europe) so as to ‘reduce the gap between the ideal of an equilateral triangle and the reality of a clearly uneven triangle.’¹²⁶ In Dent’s expectation, ‘fortifying the Eurasian axis’ would ‘side East Asia and Europe together to potentially counter any perceived US hegemonic misbehaviour in international affairs.’¹²⁷

¹²⁴ R üland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 5; Maull and Okfen, “Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM” (2003): 238; Dent, “The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility” (2004): 220.

¹²⁵ Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 73.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 34.

Furthermore, Hänggi argued that the Asians and the Europeans sought to diversify their foreign relations by using ASEM to strength their footing for ‘diplomatic manoeuvre vis-à-vis North America’, against the background of a US propensity for unilateralism.¹²⁸ According to him, ASEM also served Asia to shield from potential US domination in APEC. This view is shared by other scholars who added that ASEM, by bringing the EU and East Asia closer, could serve as a tool for the EU and the Asians to reduce American influence (economically, politically as well as militarily) in East Asia.¹²⁹ Yang wrote that ASEM was a tool for ASEAN to ‘keep a check on the US and its unilateral policy approach, and on US-led APEC.’¹³⁰

Significantly, the argument of power balancing between regions happens to be inconsistent to the state-centrism of realism. Many studies took the EU, the European side of ASEM and the Asian side of ASEM as unitary actors, which contradicts realism’s state-centrism. This issue is discussed in more detailed in Chapter 9.

Looking at the results, a few observers commented that ASEM has failed to balance the power among the Triads.¹³¹ Maull and Okfen argued that fora like ASEM and APEC could not influence the power balancing in international security as the ‘critical

¹²⁸ Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 75.

¹²⁹ François Godement and Pierre Jacquet, “After the ASEM meeting: Goals and means,” in *ASEM: How promising a partnership?*, Jacques Pelkmans and Shinkai Hiroko eds. (Brussels: European Institute for Asian Studies, 1997), 71; Brian Bridges, *Europe and the Challenge of the Asia-Pacific: Change, Continuity and Crisis* (Cheltenham/Northampton: Edward Elgar, 1999), 182; Riland, “ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 23; Gilson, “Defining Inter-regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 4; Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 21.

¹³⁰ Seung-yoon Yang, “The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEA’s Policy Toward ASEM,” *East Asian Review* 13, no.4 (2001): 86-8.

¹³¹ Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 25; Maull and Okfen, “Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM” (2003): 239; Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process” (2007): 188; Yeo, “Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM” (2008), 14.

fault lines in terms of power and security' are either intra-regional or trans-national but not inter-regional.¹³² Dent blamed 'the hesitancy of the Eurasian partnership to co-manage the post-hegemonic world order to persisting structural constraints in the Triadic political economy.'¹³³ Reiterer noted that the EU would not have the means to restrain the US presence in Asia, hence, ASEM could only 'retain a predictable and stable US presence in Asia' instead of balancing US's role by a stronger EU's presence.¹³⁴

While classical realism chiefly concentrates on military power, neo-realism focuses at economic power. Neo-realism believes that military power has become less important due to globalisation, while economic strength has become more and more important to a nation-state.¹³⁵ It is argued that territory, population and military strength matter little in the contemporary IR, whilst economic and trade strengths are crucial in power calculation. Accordingly, one key function of inter-regionalism is assumed to be balancing the economic power and the control of global market among actors in the international economic arena, especially among the Triad regions.¹³⁶ Therefore,

¹³² Maull and Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM" (2003): 239.

¹³³ Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations" (2001): 25.

¹³⁴ Reiterer, "Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia" (2005): 17.

¹³⁵ Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory" (1990): 21-37; Rüländ, "ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 6.

¹³⁶ Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad" (1999): 56-80; Gilson, "Defining Inter-regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (2002): 2; Maull and Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations" (2003): 238.

ASEM is viewed as a balancer against the US's and Japan's dominance in East Asian trade and investment markets by increasing the EU's share.¹³⁷

The second type of balancing, institution balancing, refers to the use of inter-regional links to balance regionalism in and inter-regionalism between other regions. Many observers see ASEM as a means to provide the missing link between Asia and Europe in the Triadic context. Hänggi named this 'a game of checks and balances' in 'regional blocs' scenario'.¹³⁸ Noted in many existing literature, both the Asian and EU sides were worried about each other's coalition-building with the US. Therefore, 'ASEM was seen by the EU as a welcome means to link up with the majority of APEC's Asian members and thereby offset its exclusion from APEC.'¹³⁹ For East Asia, ASEM was seen as a 'device to compensate for the traditional close link between America and Europe and as a guarantee against a possible strengthening of the transatlantic ties.'¹⁴⁰ In Gilson's words, ASEM is 'a structural necessity to develop the "third side of the [EU-US-Asia] triangle".'¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ David Camroux and Christian Lechervy, "Close Encounter of a Third Kind? The Inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting of March 1996," *The Pacific Review* 9, no.3 (1996): 444; Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations" (2001): 34; Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 228; Sung Hoon Park, "ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations: Background, characteristics and challenges," *Asia-Europe Journal* 2 (2004): 342, 344; Reiterer, "Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia" (2005): 1.

¹³⁸ Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad" (1999): 75.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*; see also Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism" (2006): 11.

¹⁴⁰ Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad" (1999): 74; see also Hänggi, "Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives" (2000): 12; Hänggi, "Regionalism through inter-regionalism" (2003), 202, 206-7; Chen, "NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order" (2005): 369-70.

¹⁴¹ Gilson, "Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (2002): 4.

Rüland illustrated the institution balancing function of inter-regionalism with empirical evidence.¹⁴² He argued that APEC was a response to the European Single Market and Canadian-US FTA, whereas ASEM was created as a reaction to APEC. Such view has been widely accepted by other scholars.¹⁴³ Godement and Jacquet called ASEM ‘the best response to APEC’.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Rüland saw ASEAN’s strong push behind ASEM as an attempt to counter the EU’s efforts in establishing free trade agreements with other regional powers, namely the Mercosur and South Africa.¹⁴⁵

Nonetheless, in the assessment of achievements in the first decade, ASEM was marked ‘failed’ in balancing the triadic relations.¹⁴⁶ In 2007, Yeo assessed ASEM’s work in institution balancing and concluded that ‘ASEM’s ability to balance APEC or to strengthen the Asia-Europe link vis-a-vis the Asia-Pacific link is unproven.’¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Rüland, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 3-4; Rüland, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 7; Rüland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism,” (2010): 1273-5.

¹⁴³ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM” (1997), 18; Rüland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 4; Dent, “From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM” (2003): 227-8; Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 20; Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM” (2005): 370; May, “Trilateral relations in a globalizing world. ASEM and the United States” (2005): 42; Bart Gaens, “Beyond ASEM6: Lessons for the Actors”, in *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism: Asian-European Relations in a Global Context*, Sebastian Bersick, Wim Stokhof and Paul van der Velde eds. (Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 132; Guang Pan, “A Chinese Perspective on ASEM’s Enlargement and Development”, in *The Asia-Europe Meeting, Engagement, Enlargement and Expectations*, Yeo and Hofmeister eds (2010), 45.

¹⁴⁴ Godement and Jacquet, “After the ASEM meeting: Goals and means” (1997), 71.

¹⁴⁵ Rüland, “ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 23; Rüland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1274-5.

¹⁴⁶ University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward, An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities* (2006), 10.

¹⁴⁷ Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations” (2007): 187.

The last function of inter-regionalism deduced from realism is bandwagon, which depicts the action of actors (usually small or weak states) to establish linkages with others out of the fear of being marginalised in international relations. Rüländ, for instance, commented that ASEM could act as a bargaining power amplifier for the EU and East Asia in the global arena.¹⁴⁸ He saw the EU's acceptance to join ASEM as an attempt to bandwagon East Asia, a dynamic economic centre and huge market, as well as to prevent marginalisation in a 'Pacific Century'.¹⁴⁹ Hänggi stated that joining ASEM could 'upgrade the international status of East Asia' and 'ensure its recognition as one of the Triad regions, at least by Europe.'¹⁵⁰

Observing the rapid development in Asia in the 1990s, Yeo commented that 'Europe has no choice but to engage the Asians if it wants a more enriching and peaceful co-existence.'¹⁵¹ Moreover, Hänggi and Gilson remarked that ASEM could help Asia to lower the risk of the EU and North America from pursuing 'closed regionalism'.¹⁵²

Similarly, Richards and Kirkpatrick thought that the EU used ASEM to prevent East

¹⁴⁸ Paul Cammack and Gareth Api Richards, "ASEM and interregionalism," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 4, no.1 (1999): 1-2; Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations" (2001): 33; Rüländ, "ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 23; Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 15; Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 227; Maull and Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM" (2003): 240; Gaens, "Beyond ASEM6: Lessons for the Actors" (2006), 132.

¹⁴⁹ Rüländ, "Interregionalism in International Relations" (2002): 5; Rüländ, "The EU as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor" (2002): 4.

¹⁵⁰ Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad" (1999): 74.

¹⁵¹ Yeo, "Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation" (2004): 29.

¹⁵² 'Closed regionalism' is an opposite concept of 'open regionalism', which Hänggi defined as 'a regionally based international economic order in which the regions develop into loose outward-looking and multilayered regional arrangements which interact intensively with each other and the rest of the world.' He stated that open regional cooperation is 'pursued in tandem with global cooperation, thereby strengthening global multilateral institutions such as the WTO and the United Nations.' in Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad" (1999): 70, 73; see also Gilson, "Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (2002): 2; Yeo, "Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation" (2004): 21.

Asia from 'close regionalism'.¹⁵³ Yeo added that open economy of the Triads could contribute to global stability and prosperity.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, Yeo saw Singapore's active push for the creation of an inter-regional forum between the EU and East Asia as an attempt of bandwagon.¹⁵⁵ As a small city-state in Southeast Asia, it was in Singapore's national interests to keep the US's continuous engagement in the region. Also due to its size, Singapore always prefers multilateralism and wishes to prevent the US from unilateralism by provoking awareness and concern of the US through creating ASEM. Yeo stated that Singapore wanted to prove its capability as a significant political and diplomatic player in Asia so as to maximise its chances of survival.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, Gilson described ASEM as a chance for the ASEAN to 'garner leverage in the face of the globalisation' as it offered ASEAN 'the opportunity to play a central role in a new international framework.'¹⁵⁷ This view was shared by Yang, who stated that 'ASEAN showed a strong political will to independently determine its own future' through playing an active role in ASEM.¹⁵⁸ For Yang as well as Hänggi, ASEAN

¹⁵³ Richards and Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Inter-regional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe's East Asian Policy" (1999): 703.

¹⁵⁴ Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations" (2007): 173-91.

¹⁵⁵ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 68.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 313.

¹⁵⁸ Yang, "The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEA's Policy Toward ASEM" (2001): 87.

sought to increase its bargaining power against the EU by inviting the ‘Plus Three’ countries from Northeast Asia to ASEM.¹⁵⁹

Apart from balancing and bandwagon, a few other functions which were mentioned sporadically were also deduced from realism. Yeo argued that South Korea joined ASEM for material interests (such as gaining industrial experience and new technologies from more advanced EU countries and Japan).¹⁶⁰ To her, ASEM participants sought concrete material interests especially in trade, investments, capital and advanced technology.¹⁶¹ Focusing on the security pursuit of nation-states, Camroux argued that Britain and France sought to sustain their individual roles in Asian security via ASEM.¹⁶²

In sum, through the realist lens, inter-regionalism is a pragmatic and flexible response of players ‘directed against others’.¹⁶³ Applying to the triadic context, scholars see inter-regionalism as a tool for the Triads to maintain equilibrium among themselves, whereas the non-Triadic regions follow and establish their own inter-regional relations to adjust to the dynamics of the Triad.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 88; H änggi, “Regionalism through inter-regionalism” (2003), 212.

¹⁶⁰ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 18.

¹⁶¹ Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 21.

¹⁶² Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism” (2006): 11.

¹⁶³ R üland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 4.

¹⁶⁴ R üland, “ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 6; R üland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism,” (2010): 1274-5.

Noteworthy, many of the aforementioned studies have applied realism to explain the balancing and bandwagon actions of regions, which are, however, not the basic unit of international relations under realism. In these cases, regional groups and organisations were referred to as independent and holistic entities instead of agents of the constituting member-states. This links back to the question regarding the applicability of realism in the study of inter-regionalism. Robles repeatedly raised this question, emphasising the absence of any independent role of regions in realism.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, these studies are rather consistent with the assumptions of realism that non-state actors like the business community, civil society organisation and international organisations are not significant. The applicability of realism to the studies of inter-regionalism and ASEM will be assessed later in this dissertation.

2.5.2. Liberal-institutionalism LI has also been applied to deduce the potential functions of inter-regionalism.¹⁶⁶ In sum, the theory denotes that inter-regional cooperation and coordination help managing complex interdependence in a multipolar world. It is believed that all international institutions, including the inter-regional ones, are able to reduce the transaction costs for cooperation and to facilitate communication. This is because the building of common institutions increases the predictability of members' behaviour and legalises international relations. The institutionalisation of an inter-regional relation helps trust-building and creates a platform for socialisation among the participants.

¹⁶⁵ Robles, *The ASEM: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (2008), 11-17.

¹⁶⁶ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 123-54; Song, "Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance" (2007): 69; Lluç López I Vidal, "The Theoretical Contribution of the Study of Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM Process", in *Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM Context- Current Dynamics and Theoretical Approaches*, Yeo & I Vidal eds. (2008), 51-52; Rüland, "Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism" (2010): 1275-8.

Rüland identified three levels of institution-building which inter-regionalism could facilitate.¹⁶⁷ First, inter-regionalism would institutionalise relations between the regions, thus would contribute to a new layer between global and regional levels of global governance. In Rüland's words, 'inter-regionalism serves as an intermediary of multilayered system of global governance with global institutions, regional organisations and nation-states as nodal point.'¹⁶⁸ Similarly, Aggarwal and Fogarty labelled inter-regionalism an 'indispensable element' of the multi-level governance system.¹⁶⁹ Chen proposed that 'a regional or inter-regional arrangement which is broader than bilateral and narrower than the multilateral arrangement may fill the governance gap.'¹⁷⁰

Following such logic, Lim argued that ASEM could serve as an institution allowing leaders of the two regions to meet regularly and talk frankly.¹⁷¹ Trust and confidence would gradually be built up, especially among the leaders personally. Eventually, past unhappy memories and suspicion from the Asian side, as former colonies of the European powers, would be replaced by mutual trust. However, Lim remarked that this would be a lengthy process. Rüland echoed this point by emphasised that 'the

¹⁶⁷ Rüland, "The EU as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor" (2002): 4-7; Rüland, "Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism" (2010): 1276-7; see also Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Interregionalism: Towards a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 218.

¹⁶⁸ Rüland, "The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe's Relations with Asia" (2002): 9; see also Richards and Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Inter-regional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe's East Asian Policy" (1999): 684.

¹⁶⁹ Aggarwal and Fogarty, *European Union Trade Strategies: Between Globalism and Regionalism* (2004), 377.

¹⁷⁰ Chen, "NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order" (2005): 376.

¹⁷¹ Lim Paul, "Whiter Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (Paper prepared for Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies: *Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)*, Washington DC, 4-7 April 2002): 1-2.

colonial humiliation is still deeply ingrained in Asia's collective memory, as is the often arrogant and insensitive donor attitude of Europeans up to 1990s.¹⁷²

Second, under LI, inter-regionalism is expected to accelerate the institutionalisation of intra-regional cooperation by increasing the demand for internal coordination, especially for the less organised side. In the ASEM case, however, the theoretical discussions focused on the EU intra-regional institutionalisation. Yeo and Reiterer believed that the EU intended to legitimise itself and foster its competency on common foreign policy through engaging with the ASEAN+3 group as well as insisting on having political dialogues in the summits.¹⁷³ Engagement in inter-regionalism is believed to intensify intra-regional communication, hence, accelerate the intra-regional institutional building.¹⁷⁴

Third, several scholars saw the establishment of ASEM as significant to integrate China and Japan (two potential hegemonies in Asia) into regional as well as multilateral cooperative frameworks.¹⁷⁵ Many others assigned ASEM the role of keeping the US (the current hegemon) honest to multilateral cooperation.¹⁷⁶ In other words,

¹⁷² R üland, "Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?" (2008): 309.

¹⁷³ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 120; Reiterer, "Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia" (2005): 8, 18.

¹⁷⁴ R üland, "ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship" (2001): 23.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 6-7; Gilson, "Japan's Role in the Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an Interregional or Intraregional Agenda?" (1999): 742-9; Bertrand Fort, "ASEM's role for co-operation on security in Asia and Europe," *Asia-Europe Journal* 2 (2004): 361; Song, "Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance" (2007): 73-4.

¹⁷⁶ Segal, "Thinking strategically about ASEM: the subsidiarity question" (1997): 127-8; H änggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad" (1999): 75; Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 160; Dent, "The ASEM and Inter-regionalism" (2004): 222-3; Reiterer Michael, "The EU and the East Asian Economic Community: a Political Will or a de facto Integration" (public speech given on 23 October 2004, accessed 8 May 2009, <www.deljpn.ec.europa.eu/home/speech_en_Speech%2017/2004.php>); Yeo, "Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation" (2004): 24.

inter-regionalism is expected to promote institutionalisation of global cooperation. Thus far, the feasibility of engaging the hegemons into cooperative multilateralism remains in doubt since scholars have yet to find any empirical evidence to support such an argument.¹⁷⁷ Although Chen pointed out the potential of inter-regional fora, with a fairly large membership, to serve to solve problems and to manage relations at regional and global levels; he concluded that the actual contribution of ASEM to global governance in its first decade was merely ‘symbolism’.¹⁷⁸ In a more recent study, Rūland also raised doubts about the actual ability of inter-regionalism in supporting international institution-building.¹⁷⁹

In addition, according to LI, inter-regionalism can be a ‘rationaliser’ for multilateral fora. As today’s multilateral fora continue to grow in complexity and membership (for example the growth from G7 to G8 to G20), the interests of participants become increasingly diverse. This slows down, and sometimes even jeopardises, the decision-making of a forum. As a result, efficiency will be hampered which can lower the legitimacy of the forum. Inter-regionalism can divide negotiations into a staggered bottom-up process, streamline the overburdened agenda, and help remove any bottlenecks at the top level of the international system.

The ideal situation is that a consensus is reached in inter-regional fora and then the participants bring their common position to multilateral fora, where they then speak in

¹⁷⁷ For examples: Rūland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 5-6; Maull and Okfen, “Inter-regionalism in international relations” (2003): 244-6.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: 369.

¹⁷⁹ Rūland, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1278, 1280.

one voice.¹⁸⁰ To Reiterer, ASEM could facilitate multilateral fora by ‘pre-discussion or even pre-negotiation of issues to be taken up in multilateral setting’.¹⁸¹ He called inter-regionalism ‘a stepping stone to global governance’.¹⁸² Nevertheless, existing research has provided little support to such ASEM achievements so far.¹⁸³ Loewen ascribed this failure of ASEM to the clash of cooperation cultures and of material interests among partners who had different economic and political interests.¹⁸⁴

A number of scholars have named the instances when ASEM members failed to achieve any common stand before meetings of the WTO or the UN.¹⁸⁵ Dent blamed the EU for missing opportunity to improve the international multilateral financial governance through ASEM after the 1997/8 Asian Financial Crisis. Yeo highlighted that ASEM members ‘have not been effective in using the ASEM framework to either

¹⁸⁰ Summary of works of several scholars including Rüländ, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 9-10; Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 7; Dent, “The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Interregionalism: Towards a Theory of Multilateral Utility” (2004): 216-22; Julie Gilson, “Trade relations between Europe and East Asia,” *Asia Europe Journal* 2, no.2 (2004): 194-5 Rüländ, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1277.

¹⁸¹ Michael Reiterer, “Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): fostering a multipolar world order through inter-regional cooperation,” *Asia Europe Journal* 7, no.1 (2009): 181.

¹⁸² Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (2005): 15.

¹⁸³ Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 7-8; Hans W. Maull and Nuria Okfen, “Comparing interregionalism: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Europe Meeting” in *Interregionalism and International Relations*, Hänggi *et al.* eds. (2006), 230; Howard Loewen, “East Asia and Europe—partners in global politics?,” *Asia Europe Journal* 5 (2007): 23-31; Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations” (2007): 188.

¹⁸⁴ Loewen, “East Asia and Europe—partners in global politics?” (2007): 26-27.

¹⁸⁵ Segal, “Thinking Strategically about ASEM: the Subsidiary Quest” (1997): 124-34; Rüländ, “ASEAN and the EU: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 26; Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 41-42; Dent, “From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM” (2003): 231; Maull and Okfen, “Inter-regionalism in international relations: Comparing APEC and ASEM” (2003): 239-42; Dent, “ASEM and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility” (2004): 223-4.

shape agenda in WTO or push for reform in multilateral institutions.’¹⁸⁶ She added that with the current institutional setting, ASEM would not be able to rationalise or facilitate multilateral governance, neither in security nor trade and monetary areas.¹⁸⁷

In addition, Yeo pointed out that against the background of a ‘backlash against globalisation’ and ‘revival of nationalism’, fora like ASEM were important for Asia and Europe to ‘civilise globalisation’.¹⁸⁸ Yet, to her, ASEM has only been ‘a modest tool in the whole plethora of regional and international policy measures, instruments and institutions to manage international consultation and cooperation.’¹⁸⁹

Apart from rationalising multilateral negotiations, inter-regionalism is expected to rationalise international relations. This refers to the fact that an actor, no matter national or regional, can deal with many other actors in one forum. Consequently, transaction costs for managing foreign relations will be reduced.¹⁹⁰ Gilson described ASEM as one mechanism for the EU to manage economic and political relations with a ‘growing yet disparate’ Asia.¹⁹¹ Lai’s empirical research demonstrated that inter-regional meetings like ASEM provided participants with the opportunities to meet bilaterally on the sidelines.¹⁹² Some observers saw this function especially

¹⁸⁶ Yeo, “Regionalism and Interregionalism in the ASEM” (2008): 14.

¹⁸⁷ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 90-92.

¹⁸⁸ Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 24-25.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 30.

¹⁹⁰ Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Transregional Actors: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 7.

¹⁹¹ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 308.

¹⁹² Lai Suetyi, “To ‘Bi’ or not to ‘Bi’- When bilateralism is the choice of actors in ASEM” (online publication on Institute of European Democrats website, published in December 2009, available at <www.iedonline.eu/news/dir/17/view/54/eusa-see-more-documents-5400.html>).

helpful to small states as unique opportunities were offered to small states to meet a large number of other states in one forum.¹⁹³ Compare with big states, small states lack the attractiveness, human and financial resources to build bilateral relations with a large number of states. Additionally, small states can form alliances when bargaining with larger powers so that their voice will no longer be neglected.

Also deduced from LI, agenda-setting refers to the efforts made in inter-regional fora to agree on an agenda of common concerns and then to put it on the agenda of multilateral fora. Again, there was little evidence to support such an argument, as suggested by Rüländ.¹⁹⁴ Song totally denied such function of inter-regionalism.¹⁹⁵ Yeo suggested that ASEM would never be able to ‘influence the global agenda’ or ‘strengthen multilateralism’ with its informal and non-legally binding institution.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, Farrell argued that ASEM ‘could not facilitate agreements on common positions nor agenda-setting for the global institutions’ mainly due to the ideationally difference between Asia and Europe in terms of value.¹⁹⁷

As shown above, the liberal-institutionalist school emphasises the importance of inter-regional cooperation under complex interdependence. In order to facilitate cooperation, the formation of a common institution will be crucial: an inter-regional

¹⁹³ Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (2005): p.15; Jörn Dosch, “The impact of EU-Enlargement on relations between Europe and East Asia,” *Asia-Europe Journal* 5, no.1 (2007): 35.

¹⁹⁴ Rüländ, “Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?” (2008): 307; Rüländ, “Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism” (2010): 1277.

¹⁹⁵ Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 8; Song, “Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance” (2007): 79.

¹⁹⁶ Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 21, 28.

¹⁹⁷ Farrell, “The EU and Inter-Regional Cooperation: In Search of Global Presence?” (2004): 13.

regime like ASEM is one option. LI assumes that inter-regional institutions can contribute to a new layer between global and regional levels of global governance, accelerate institutionalisation of intra-regional cooperation, bind hegemons into multilateralism, rationalise negotiation and set agenda in multilateral fora, rationalise international relations, help small nation-states managing foreign relations and build confidence among players in international arena. Nevertheless, ASEM's ability to fulfil most of these functions has been disproved or doubted in existing studies.

2.5.3. Social constructivism Among various theoretically-deduced functions of inter-regionalism, the enhancement of regional identity has received the most academic attention.¹⁹⁸ From the cognitive perspective, nation-states and/or regional organisations from different regions interact with each other and gain experiences. Through these interactions, identity of 'self' and 'the other' is continually formed and reformed (or reshaped, redefined and recreated in Gilson's word¹⁹⁹). Actors from the same regions are expected to become more coherent as a result of repetitive collective participation in an inter-regional forum. Regional identities enhance when states from two distinct regions interact under an inter-regional approach as differences between 'self' and 'other' are sharpened. Accordingly, social constructivists see inter-regionalism as a tool to form or foster regional identity, especially for heterogeneous and newly formed regional groupings. Eventually, the constituent

¹⁹⁸ H änggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad" (1999): 56-80; Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002); H änggi, "Regionalism through interregionalism: East Asia and ASEM" (2003): 197-219; Maull and Okfen, "Inter-regionalism in international relations" (2003): 237-49; Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism" (2004); Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 307-26; Reiterer, "Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia" (2005): 5-6, 16; Chen, "NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order" (2005): 372; Rössler, "Eurasia: re-emergence of two world regions-the effects of inter-regionalism on regional integration" (2009): 313-26.

¹⁹⁹ Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 13-14.

regions of an inter-regional forum are expected to develop into independent actors in international relations, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Gilson proposed the notion of ‘double regional project’, arguing that when members of a regional group pooled resources together to deal with another regional group, the stronger (or only existing) regional group would trigger regionalism in the partner region.²⁰⁰ In this situation, the more advanced regional group appeared as a significant ‘other’, and became what R üland and Gaens called ‘external federator’.²⁰¹ The external federator drove the less developed regional group towards its own model of integration. In return, it would benefit from the advancement in regionalism of its counterpart as the legitimacy of its regional integration increased.²⁰²

The term ‘regional integrator’ is used as well.²⁰³ Gilson called ASEM as ‘regional integrator’ for ASEM Asian members.²⁰⁴ She argued that ASEM brought a group of East Asian countries to meet face-to-face with a united EU, who acted as a significant other. Through repetitive interactions with the EU, the East Asia states would gradually get used to acting as a region, thus, a regional identity would form.

²⁰⁰ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 309-10.

²⁰¹ R üland, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 8-9; R üland, “Inter- and Trans-regionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda” (2002): 11; Bart Gaens, “ASEM as a Tool to ‘Bridge the Cultural Divide’”, in *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*, Gaens Bart ed. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 99.

²⁰² Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (2005): 18; Fredrik Soderbaum, Patrick Stalgren and Luk van Langenhove, “The EU as a Global Actor and the Dynamics of Inter-regionalism: a Comparative Analysis”, in *The EU as a Global Player: The Politics of Interregionalism*, S öderbaum and van Langenhove (eds) (2006), 117-33.

²⁰³ Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 2; Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 110; see also Hanna W. Maull and Akihiko Tanaka, “The Geopolitical Dimension”, in *The Rationale and Common Agenda for Asia-Europe Cooperation*, (CAEC Task Force Reports, Tokyo/London: Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation, 1997), 34.

²⁰⁴ Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 2.

Consequently, ASEM led to enhanced collaborations in East Asia and ‘self-identification’ of East Asia as a region by ‘providing a functional structure and a cognitive backdrop for new forms of collective behaviour.’²⁰⁵ Gilson stated that the acceptance of the ‘ASEM Asia’ as a regional group by the EU further confirmed such an identity, constituting the ‘mirror effect’.²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, she warned that the EU risked becoming an ‘anti-model’ for regionalism to its Asian counterparts in ASEM as a result of the EU’s ceaseless attempts to intervene the political-economic regulations, human rights and democratisation in East Asian countries.²⁰⁷ From her observation between ASEM1 and ASEM5, Gilson claimed that a regional identity among the ASEM Asian states became tangible and growing.²⁰⁸

Empirically, Gilson illustrated how ‘the agents and structures form and reform mutually’ using the case of Japan in ASEM.²⁰⁹ She said that Japan first joined the ASEM process with caution as the US was excluded from the new forum and it was the ASEAN in the driver seat. After attending several meetings as part of the ‘Asian group’, Japan was brought closer to its Asian neighbours as ASEM’s structure allowed Japanese officials to meet their Asian counterparts more regularly and frequently on both bilateral and regional formats.²¹⁰ The fact that the EU as well as other Asian states perceived Japan as a regional power in Asia also contributed to

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 6.

²⁰⁶ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 321; see also H änggi, “Regionalism through inter-regionalism” (2003): 211-12.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*: 320-1; Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 13.

²⁰⁸ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 320-1.

²⁰⁹ Gilson, “Japan’s Role in the Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an interregional or Intraregional Agenda?” (1999): 736-52.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 737-8, 741-3.

Japan's increasing sense of belonging to Asia. Subsequently, Gilson argued that Japan has become more Asia-oriented and more active in ASEM. Meanwhile, the 'Asianisation' on the ASEM's Asian side was strengthened.²¹¹

H änggi applied the same logic to the case of China, stating that ASEM helped China's neighbours to engage the giant in East Asian region-building.²¹² He concluded that one of ASEM's key impacts was 'the promotion of intra-regional cooperation in East Asia, namely bridging the "missing link" between Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia and involving China in a "learning process" of regional cooperation.'²¹³ In other words, inter-regionalism is assumed to provide a process of socialisation for hegemony and hopefully engages them into cooperation so as to prevent unilateralism.

Yeo saw ASEM as a catalyst for the formation of the ASEAN+3 group in 1997.²¹⁴ Yet, she underscored that the ASEAN+3 group had to be treated as an independent entity which possessed its own life, rather than dependent on ASEM. Indeed, there were other crucial factors influencing the regionalisation in East Asia apart from ASEM.²¹⁵ Yeo pointed out that the discourse and activities generated by intellectuals and think tanks were particularly important in creating a sense of necessity for regionalisation in East Asia.²¹⁶ She observed a growing sense of 'shared interest and

²¹¹ *Ibid.*: 743-8.

²¹² H änggi, "Regionalism through inter-regionalism" (2003): 212-3.

²¹³ *Ibid.*: 212; H änggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad" (1999): 73.

²¹⁴ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 110.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 115-9; Lay Hwee Yeo, "Ten Years of ASEM—Changes and Challenges", in *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism*, Bersick *et al* eds. (2006), 143-5.

²¹⁶ Yeo, "Ten Years of ASEM—Changes and Challenges" (2006), 144.

joint responsibility' among the political, business and intellectual leaders in East Asia in building a regional community to secure a stable regional order. However, Yeo found that the actual process of regionalism in East Asia was rather slow and on an unclear path.²¹⁷ Yeo concluded that ASEM could only be credited for facilitating East Asian regionalism indirectly. Reiterer was even more pessimistic and labelled the East Asian cohesion as 'limited'.²¹⁸

Rüland and Dent highlighted the feasibility of a collective identity of an inter-regional grouping to emerge or enhance after continuous socialisations and interactions.²¹⁹ As such, ASEM partners would develop a common identity; eventually, ASEM would become an individual global actor. They underlined that the building of this inter-regional identity had to take a long time before bearing any fruits. In 2006, Yeo observed that no ASEM common identity had been established in ASEM first decade.²²⁰ She attributed this to ASEM's inexact self-definition; complicated relations with other bilateral, regional or multilateral frameworks; low visibility and public profile.

Another function of ASEM through the lens of social constructivism relates to the communication and learning opportunities it offers. When actors communicate and socialise with each other, the mutual perception change; then, their relationships

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 145

²¹⁸ Reiterer, "Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): fostering a multipolar world order through inter-regional cooperation" (2009): 187, 192-3.

²¹⁹ Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 231-2; Rüland, "Interregionalism in International Relations" (2002): 9.

²²⁰ Yeo, "Ten Years of ASEM- Changes and Challenges" (2006), 147-8.

change accordingly.²²¹ Richards and Kirkpatrick expected ASEM to bring developing and developed member states to communicate with and understand each other better, which could eventually reduce the ‘North-South’ division.²²² Cammack and Richards argued that the communication between former European colonial-rulers and their Asian ex-colonies through ASEM would ‘replace any lingering residue of still remembered colonialism with a relationship based on equality.’²²³ Several other scholars asserted that the cultural, political and information bias between Asia and Europe would be eliminated by increased mutual communication and understanding via ASEM; subsequently, trade and investment barriers would also diminish.²²⁴ Yeo wrote that ASEM’s meetings and initiatives would lead to networking and confidence-building among participants.²²⁵ Hänggi argued that ASEM allowed China and Japan to socialise with each other so as to alleviate mutual distrust.²²⁶

In general, the existing research focused on one function of inter-regionalism deduced from social constructivism – regional identity building. Rüland and Gilson have both mentioned a largely ignored function of inter-regionalism – the export of values and

²²¹ Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics” (1992): 391-425.

²²² Richards and Kirkpatrick, “Reorienting Inter-regional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe’s East Asian Policy” (1999): 684.

²²³ Cammack and Richards, “ASEM and interregionalism” (1999): 3.

²²⁴ Godement and Jacquet, “After the ASEM meeting: Goals and means” (1997), 62; Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad”, 1999, p.74

²²⁵ Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 30.

²²⁶ Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 73.

concepts to other regions.²²⁷ They considered ASEM as a vehicle of the EU to propagate concepts such as good governance, rule of law, human rights, democracy and market economy to Asia. Nevertheless, the discussions of such function have been very brief.

A notable challenge facing the social constructivist view is the difficulty in gauging its impact. For instance, the sense of belonging to a region and the degree of mutual trust are too abstract to be measured. There are also many other intervening factors like external crisis and shared histories influencing the integration process of a region. Furthermore, how would the entry of non-ASEAN+3 Asian states impact on the cohesion in ASEM's Asian side has not been explored either.

In sum, existing studies have introduced more than ten theoretically deduced functions of inter-regionalism and ASEM (summarised in Table 2.1), demonstrating a trend among scholars to combine various IR theories. Remarkably, it is observed that different theoretical approach could indeed lead to the same end: different theories are used to deduce the same functions of ASEM. For instance, intra-regional regime building could be a result of intra-regional institution-building under LI, regional identity building under social constructivism or bandwagon under realism. Both realism and LI see inter-regionalism as a tool to prevent unilateralism of hegemons. Increased inter-regional trade and investment could be an outcome from institution-balancing or bandwagon under realism, or a change of mutual understanding under constructivism. To better understand the similarities and

²²⁷ Gilson, "New Inter-regionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 308; Rüländ, "Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?" (2006): 302; Rüländ, "Balancer, Multilateral Utilities or Regional Identity Builder? International Relations and the Study of Interregionalism" (2010): 1278-9.

differences between various IR theories, next section explores the functions of inter-regional fora and ASEM as deduced from other theories.

Table 2.1: Theoretical-deduced functions of inter-regionalism, by theories

Realism	Liberal-institutionalism	Social Constructivism
Power-balancing	Institution-building i) a layer of multi-level governance ii) intra-regional institution iii) engage hegemon in global multilateralism	Regional identity building
Institution-balancing	Rationalising multilateral fora/cooperation	Improve mutual understanding and/or trust of actors
Bandwagon	Rationalising international relations	Norms and concepts exporting
Gaining material interests	Agenda setting for multilateral institutions	

2.5.4. Other theoretical approaches As mentioned earlier, Dent has developed the *multilateral utility* thesis to analyse the functions of inter-regionalism. He identified three functions of inter-regional fora like ASEM. The first and most crucial function was to connect the regional regimes with the one at global levels, which corresponded to the aforementioned institution-building function. Dent's second *multilateral utility* was the 'clearing houses for decision-making bottlenecks in global multilateral forum' which corresponded to the 'rationalisation of multilateral negotiation' function deduced from LI. Dent labelled this 'pre-negotiation/pre-debating over global issues' and 'pre-cooked pluri-lateral accords signed at

inter-regional level'.²²⁸ The third *multilateral utility* of inter-regionalism was 'multilateral community building and multilateral citizenship development among its member states' as consequences of deepening socialisation at micro-networking as well as macro-networking levels.²²⁹ This corresponded to the 'regional identity building' function proposed by Gilson. Yet, Dent emphasised that the results yielded by micro-networking and macro-networking would take a long time to be mature. Moreover, he stated that ASEM was uniquely equipped with the *utility* to counter-balance the US's hegemonic unilateralism.

Cammack suggested new materialism as a better approach to assess the ASEM process.²³⁰ Applying the new materialist paradigm, he argued that the domestic problems an individual state faced would affect the state's ability to engage at regional, inter-regional and global levels. In other words, the higher the support a state obtained from its domestic society on an external policy, the easier the state can establish cooperation with other actors outside its national borders. Individual states would pursue national goals through participating in regional or inter-regional fora. Reversely, Cammack suggested that the states would utilise regional and inter-regional fora to impose policies or transmit disciplines to their domestic society. He argued that European leaders could exploit ASEM to impose 'Asian values' (such

²²⁸ Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Interregionalism: Towards a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 221.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*: 222; Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 231-2. Dent suggests that there should be two levels of networking under inter-regional frameworks: micro-networking and macro-networking. Micro-networking refers to socialisation processes among different groups of individuals. In contrast, macro-networking concerns interactions between countries and cultures. Moreover, he believes that 'macro-networking links are essentially founded on micro-networking links'.

²³⁰ Cammack, "Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the new materialism" (1999): 13-32.

as prioritising communal interest of the society to individual interest) back home to discipline the European population.²³¹

Apart from determining what could be the potential functions, some studies went further to assess whether ASEM has fulfilled these functions. Yet, these assessments were often not supported by empirical evidence. Besides, the assessment of the functions deduced from social constructivism is rare due to the difficulty in gauging abstract concepts like identity and perception. Table 2.2 summarises the assessment of ASEM available thus far. Instead of following the theoretical-deductive approach to access the functions (or add-value) of inter-regionalism, this research explores the empirical evidence, and then identify what an inter-regional forum such as ASEM can offer to its partners as well as to the international relations (in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8).

Generally, all the aforementioned studies treated ASEM as a tool of its members instead of as an individual actor that could act independently. ASEM has not been entitled with any individual *actorness*. Its constituent parts (no matter nation-states or regional organisations) were said to utilise ASEM to fulfil their own national/regional goals. Not only ASEM as an independent actor, but also non-state actors like civil society organisations and the general public were hardly mentioned in these studies of ASEM's potential functions.

²³¹ *Ibid.*: 14, 28.

Table 2.2: Theoretical-deduced functions of ASEM listed in existing studies

Theory	Deduced functions of ASEM	Scholars disagree
Realism	For states from Asia and Europe to join together to balance the US	Muall & Okfen, Dent, Reiterer, Yeo
	For Asia to diversify its external relations so as to decrease the dependence on the US, and that on Japan economically	Reiterer
	For EU to establish links with East Asia to balance APEC	Yeo, <i>ASEM evaluation 2006</i>
	For Asia to establish links with the EU to balance the transatlantic links	Yeo, <i>ASEM evaluation 2006</i>
	For ASEAN to balance the inter-regional FTAs between the EU and other regional organisations	n/a
	For Asia and Europe to join together to increase their bargaining powers in international relations	n/a
	For the EU to prevent being marginalised in the 'Pacific Century'	n/a
	For Asian states to keep the US engaged in the region	n/a
	For states to increase the chance of survival by showing their importance via participation in ASEM	n/a
	For ASEAN to increase its role in international relations by grouping together with the EU and Northeast Asia	n/a
	For states to pursue material gains like trade and technology	n/a
	Liberal-institutionalism	To serve as a layer in the multi-level governance
To foster intra-regional building in the constituent regions		n/a
To help socialise large powers, such as the US and China, into multilateralism		R üland, Muall & Okfen
To coordinate positions between the EU and East Asia before multilateral fora like the WTO and the UN		Loewen, Yeo, R üland, Muall & Okfen, Segel, Farrel
For the EU to manage relations with a large group of Asian countries at the same time		n/a
To facilitate bilateral relations among partners		n/a
To facilitate small states to expand external relations		n/a
To help multilateral fora to set agenda		Yeo, R üland, Farrel
To build trust and confidence among partners especially between past rivals		n/a
Social constructivism	To build regional-identity among East Asian participants	Reiterer
	To give rise to a new actor, ASEM itself, in international arena	n/a
	To increase communication among participants so as to reduce mutual rivalry or hatred	n/a
	For the EU to export its norms and value to East Asia	R üland

2.6. Contribution to IR theories

The foregoing analysis covered various theoretical approaches which have been applied in the study of inter-regionalism. Through the lens of various schools of thought, inter-regionalism is perceived differently. As each scholar has his/her own preference of theoretical frameworks, the resulted pictures about what inter-regionalism can be and can achieve vary. Through an in-depth examination of the Asia-Europe Meeting process as a case-study, this research inductively tests the validity of the three major IR theories.

Regarding actors in international relations, the centrality of nation-state which realists strongly assert, will be questioned. The question ‘is ASEM a forum only for nation-states?’ is addressed. The significance of non-state actors, especially the regional and international institutions, advocated by LI, is investigated. Moreover, this research tests the existence of mutual construction and re-construction between the agents and the structure authored by social constructivists. The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to identify the IR theory or theories which is/are the most appropriate in explaining the current international relations. Before this conceptual and empirical analysis is undertaken, the following chapter describes the methodology underpinning this doctoral research.

Chapter Three

Methodologies

3.1. Introduction

This chapter elaborates the methods selected for data collection and data analysis in the examination of the actors and their interactions in the ASEM process, the selected case-study of inter-regionalism. As pointed out in previous chapters, literature on inter-regionalism in general and on the ASEM process in particular has been theory-led: existing IR theories have typically been employed to explain the development and the functions of inter-regionalism as a new phenomenon in international relations.²³² There is a significant deficit of empirically-driven research in the field. With the exception of the special report on attitudes and perceptions of Chinese university students and elites towards the ASEM process (published in 2006²³³), other ASEM-oriented research has included limited empirical evidence.

In order to comprehensively understand inter-regionalism and the ASEM process as a case-study of it, this research incorporates a substantial empirical study using an unprecedented array of primary data. It explores the awareness of the ASEM process

²³² For example: Pelkmans and Hiroko, "The Promise of ASEM" (1997), 1-20; Hänggi, "ASEM and the Construction of the new Triad" (1999): 56-80; Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002); Dent, "From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM" (2003): 223-35; Dent, "The Asia-Europe Meeting and Inter-regionalism: Toward a Theory of Multilateral Utility" (2004): 213-28; Rüländ, "Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant?" (2006): 45-62; Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process" (2007): 173-91; Rüländ and Storz, "Interregionalism and Interregional Cooperation: The Case of Asia-Europe Relations"(2008), 3-31.

²³³ Zhu Liqun, "China", in *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward*, Tadashi Yamamoto and Lay Hwee Yeo eds. (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2006), 4-38.

among the general public in selected ASEM member countries in both Asia and Europe; the views and attitudes of national decision-makers on ASEM Asia; the opinions of key ASEM informants; and, all available ASEM official documents. This empirical analysis combines various data collection and data analysis methods: content analysis on news media, public opinion surveys, elite interviews, participant observations and archival research. This combination of methodological approaches is unique in the existing body of research on ASEM.

This dissertation seeks to expand the range of information and data used to examine ASEM, by incorporating the news media and public opinion, two aspects that are totally new in the study of ASEM and of inter-regionalism. Moreover, participant observation and key informant interviews are data collection methods which have seldom been applied in the examination of the ASEM process. Such empirically-rich data allows this research to go beyond current studies which are often theory-based. The majority of research applied theories without reference to empirical evidence, which has led to a discrepancy between the theoretically-deduced models of ASEM and what the process is really about. Entrusting the news media as a source of factual information and the interviewed key informants as source of insider information, this research attempts to unveil the reality.

In particular, the news reportage of ASEM is identified as a complementary source of information that provides factual information (such as who attends the meetings and what they do in the sidelines of the plenary sessions) which is not available in the scholarly literature or the official documents. Noteworthy, the official documents which are available (e.g. Chairmen's Statements after the summits and ministerial

meetings) are always carefully tailored and sometimes revised word for word,²³⁴ as they have to be approved in consensus by the ASEM partners. It is presumed that the media views and writes about the ASEM process from a different perspective. Except those state-owned ones or those under censorship, it is assumed that the media outlets would practice professional journalism and hence are more critical than the ASEM partner governments. Subsequently, information which is absent in the official documents may be found in the news reports.

Although the ASEM official discourses repeatedly refer to the general public as a ‘key component’ and ‘key stakeholder’ of the process,²³⁵ there has yet been any study on the actual involvement of the public in the process thus far. Nor has there been any research on public opinion on ASEM. This research is the first to examine the public awareness and opinion on ASEM using original primary public survey data. Consequently, the actual engagement of the general public in ASEM can be better understood.

Each research method has its methodological strengths and limitations, they are discussed in detailed below. Taking a post-positivist perspective, this research is well aware that different data collection methods produce different types of method effect, therefore, the corresponding strategies to overcome such effects are proposed and discussed below.

²³⁴ Chairman’s Statement of the forth Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, Madrid, 6-7 June 2002, Annex-ASEM Working Method, point d; Byung-ok Kil, “Senior officials wrap up negotiations on key documents for ASEM leaders”, *Korean Herald*, 20 October 2000; Roger Dean du Mars, “Leaders to enhance tenuous links between continents”, *South China Morning Post*, 20 October 2000; “Denmark’s PM urged to attend Bangkok meeting”, *Bangkok Post*, 13 February 1996.

²³⁵ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 1, 8, 17, 19; *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part III; see also *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM1*, 1996, paragraph 4, 17; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM2*, 1998, paragraph 3; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 7; *Chair’s Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 75.

3.2. Archival analysis

One key source of information of this research is the official documents issued under the ASEM framework, normally after the summits and other official meetings. These documents are found in the official document archives managed by some ASEM partners' foreign ministries, the *ASEM Infoboard* (www.aseminfoboard.org, the official website of the ASEM process managed by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)),²³⁶ as well as the official website of ASEF. These official documents (available free of charge) serve as a primary source of official information about the ASEM process.

The main advantage of archival analysis is its unobtrusive nature, that is, it seldom exerts effect on the subjects of the study as the content under analysis has already been finalised. However, as depicted by Burnham *et al.*, they are 'dry and sanitised',²³⁷ offering researchers 'unwieldy' or 'little' original contribution to generate to the discipline.²³⁸ Another challenge is the sheer size and complexity of the archives. Conversely, there are some archives which do not provide access to all needed documents.

ASEM, being a relatively young institution, has not yet generated a massive amount of official documents. Therefore, it is manageable to include all of them from the inception of the process to the most recent summit. However, the existing documents

²³⁶ After eight years of usage since 2004, *ASEM Infoboard* was renovated by ASEF in early 2012. The new version was relaunched on 1 March 2012. Noteworthy, the writing of dissertation is mostly completed before the relaunch of *ASEM Infoboard*, hence, the information used referred to those in the version before 1 March 2012.

²³⁷ Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland Lutz, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, second edition (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 194.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

have not been systematically published by a single party nor have they been regularly made available for the public. One reason is the absence of a secretariat or administrative body to manage a single office which collects a complete set of ASEM official documents. Thus, the type of documents as well as their content and style vary when they are published by different ASEM partners' governments. In addition, the records of some senior official meetings are not published. The availability of ASEM-related documents published by individual partners varies greatly. While some (namely Japan, South Korea and the European Commission) provide a great number of official documents related to ASEM in English, other partners neither offer the documents in English nor build any public archive. These limitations notwithstanding, the available documents do supply sufficient information for this research.

The documents analysed include the following:

- the *Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (AECF2000*, the unofficial handbook of the process) and its precedent *AECF1998*;
- Chairmen's Statements of the nine ASEM summits;
- all special issue-based statements or declarations issued by the summits;
- Chairmen's Statements of all ASEM ministerial meetings (MMs);
- Chairmen's Statements of ASEM Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI);
- Chairmen's Statements of other ASEM senior officials meetings (SOMs) which are made available to the public (only about half of the SOMs do so);
- official documents related to ASEM published by individual ASEM partner governments (such as the press conference reports and press releases);
- public speeches made by the ASEM leaders during ASEM meetings; and,

- official documents published by the European Commission from the mid-1990s in regard to the EU's relations with Asia.²³⁹

The unit of analysis in the content analysis of the aforementioned documents is a proposition which contains subject and action. Employing a qualitative approach, this research uses this data to illustrate the ruling principles, institutional design and the roles assigned for different actors of the ASEM process. The findings are elaborated in Chapter 5. The relevant propositions also inform on the content of ASEM's Track 1 and Track 2 meetings (the results are elaborated in Chapters 6 and 8 respectively). Employing a quantitative approach, the data is used to assess the significance of different actors in the process. This is done by comparing the number of proposition in which each type of actor is mentioned. In addition, this research studies the available press conference reports issued by the ASEM partners. These reports supply information of the sideline meetings which took place on the margins of the past ASEM summits (the data is utilised in Chapter 7).

Public accessibility of ASEM's Track1 meetings is strictly limited, especially the summits (in order to encourage free and frank interactions among the Heads of State/Government, no advisers or ministers are allowed in the meeting room, doors are strictly closed to journalists and academics), the official documents issued after the meetings are valuable sources which are available. An analysis of these official documents provides valid insights into the official positions of the ASEM partners.

²³⁹ Commission of the European Communities, *Towards a New Asia Strategy* (Communication from the Commission to the European Council and to the European Parliament, COM (94) 314 final, Brussels, 1994); European Commission, *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships* (Communication from the Commission to the Council, Brussels, 2001); European Commission, *Vademecum: Modalities for Future ASEM Dialogue Taking the Process Forward*, (Brussels, 2001); European Commission, *Regional Programming for Asia: Strategy Document 2007-2013* (Brussels, 2007).

However, they represent merely one research perspective. In order to enrich the source of information, this research extends its interest to the views of ASEM through the eyes of the participants. A number of writings on ASEM produced by officials who had attended any ASEM meeting are collected and analysed.²⁴⁰ These written publications offer extra information and insights alongside those from the official documents. Moreover, other possible sources of data collection, namely observation, content analysis, interviews and survey, are applied in this research so as to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the ASEM process.

3.3. Participant observation

Participant observation refers to the first-hand observation and data collection when the researcher becomes part of the events under study.²⁴¹ Lofland *et al.* defined the method as ‘the process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and situationally appropriate relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a social scientific understanding of that

²⁴⁰ Reiterer Michael, *Asia-Europe: Do They Meet? Reflections on the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)* (Singapore: Asia-Europe Foundation, 2002); Reiterer, “The EU and the East Asian Economic Community: a Political Will or a de facto Integration” (2004); Reiterer, “Inter-regionalism: A New Diplomatic Tool, the European Experience with East Asia” (2005); Rui Pereira, “The Helsinki Summit and the future course of Asia-Europe Meeting,” *Asia-Europe Journal* 5 (2007): 17-21; Reiterer, “Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): fostering a multipolar world order through inter-regional cooperation” (2009): 179-96; Thomas Roe, “Towards the 8th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Beyond: Asia-Europe Cooperation in the 21st Century,” in *The Asia-Europe Meeting, Engagement, Enlargement and Expectations*, Yeo and Hofmeister eds. (2010), 13-20; Bertrand de Crombrughe, “The Value of the Asia-Europe Meeting,” *Studia Diplomatica* LXIV, no.3 (2011): 109-27.

²⁴¹ Summary of works including: Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 264-5; Earl Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research*, fourth edition (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 317-9; Martin Brett Davies, *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using qualitative or quantitative methods* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 170-2; John Lofland, David Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland, *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, fourth edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2006), 17-18; Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*, fourth edition (New York: Longman, 1995), 199-221.

association.²⁴² In practice, the researcher observes and records the behaviour of the people in the natural social setting. At the same time, researchers gain first-hand experience of the situation in the manner in which its subjects are experiencing. Lofland and Lofland highlighted the opportunities for collecting additional evidence through formal or informal interviews and the collection of documentary materials when the researcher is undertaking direct observation.²⁴³

The author of this dissertation visited Brussels between July and October 2010 and participated as a member of the academia, think tanks or media in numerous ASEM8-related events. These events ranged from seminars and conferences organised by think tanks, academic institutions and the European Commission, to the eighth Asia-Europe People's Forum. In this case, the data collection approach was obtrusive as the researcher explicitly informed the organisers and fellow-participants in the ASEM-related events about her research role. In order to minimise the obtrusive nature of the observation process, the researcher managed to build trusting relationships with the observation subjects, which were the key in the debriefing of research observations.

As Manheim and Rich point out, participant observation is not a common research method in political science because many of the subjects are 'too large a scale to allow direct observation'.²⁴⁴ Moreover, the researchers usually have limited access to

²⁴² Lofland *et al.*, *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (2006), 17.

²⁴³ John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland, *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1984), 12, cited in Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 265.

²⁴⁴ Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 200.

governmental meetings and activities; the high cost in time and money also challenge participant observation.²⁴⁵ Additionally, researchers have to avoid losing objectivity while they get closer and more familiar with the subjects in study.

Due to the limitation in access to the governmental events, the author only gained access to the unofficial-track activities which included the *ASEM Public Conference on Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations* organised by the European Commission on 12-13 July 2010, which gathered academic, think tankers, public policy experts, civil society organisations, media professionals and government representatives from ASEM countries;²⁴⁶ the *4th Connecting Civil Societies in Asia and Europe Conference* and the *5th Editors' Roundtable* on 2-3 October 2010, both organised by ASEF in parallel to the *8th ASEM summit*. On Track 3, the author became one of the volunteer helpers to the Organising Committee of AEPF8 during the few days before the occurrence of the forum. Then, the author attended the second half of the AEPF8 on 4-5 October 2010 (the whole AEPF8 lasted between 2 and 5 October 2010). Participation in these events provided this research with access to interview different types of the actors, from government officials to think tanks, academia, news makers and representatives of various civil society organisations.

In addition, in 2006 author of this dissertation was recruited as a researcher by an ASEF-funded transnational research project, *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*. Subsequently, she did not only gain first-hand experience to work with the Intellectual Department of ASEF, but also the opportunities to participate in a number of public events and academic seminars organised by ASEF.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ For more information, see <eeas.europa.eu/asem/2010conference/index_en.htm>.

Observation and information obtained provided valuable and useful insights for this research, especially regarding the types of actors and the coordination of the ASEM-related activities. This rich data was used mainly to contextualise the whole research rather than being applied in a particular chapter. Three other types of data collection methods whose usages are more chapter-specific are discussed below.

3.4. Content analysis of news media

In order to embrace a diversity of perspectives, this research employs also content analysis of the news reportage of ASEM in selected Asian countries. Such unique dataset provides a perspective complementary to the governmental sources.

Manheim and Rich defined content analysis as ‘the systematic counting, assessing, and interpreting of the form and substance of communication.’²⁴⁷ Berger referred it to ‘a nonintrusive methodology in which the researcher examines particular elements in a text or collection of texts to quantify them and use them for statistical analysis.’²⁴⁸ The unit of analysis in this research is a news item referencing ‘Asia-Europe Meeting’/ ‘Asia-Europe Summit’ / ‘ASEM’. Apart from being unobtrusive, content analysis is a reliable research method in which errors can be identified and corrected. As Babbie suggested ‘the concreteness of materials studied in content analysis strengthens the likelihood of reliability. You can always code and recode and even recode again if you want, making certain that the coding is consistent.’²⁴⁹ In contrast,

²⁴⁷ Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 184.

²⁴⁸ Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Analysis Techniques*, fourth edition (US: Sage, 2012), 233, see also 135-8.

²⁴⁹ Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research* (2008), 361-2.

errors in a survey or experiment cost more time and money to amend, whereas some are not amendable at all. Moreover, longitudinal study is possible as long as the raw data is available. Content analysis is inexpensive as no special equipment is needed. Concerning news media analysis, many physical or electronic news archives charge a small subscription fee or simply open to users for free. However, the reliance of the availability of the raw data indeed constitutes a disadvantage of this research tool.

In order to conduct a longitudinal study, this research collected and analysed the news items which featured ASEM from 1996 (ASEM1) to 2012 (ASEM9). Six English-language dailies each from a different location on the ASEM Asian side were chosen to be monitored. Different press outlets are included to diversify the source of information as well as to facilitate cross-national comparisons. The choice of the newspapers followed that of an existing trans-national research 'Public, Elite and Media Perceptions of the EU in the Asia-Pacific Region' (*the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*). While the central focus of *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project is the EU, the ASEM process as the highest diplomatic interaction between the EU and Asia is also studied. How the EU and the ASEM are conceived in Asia-Pacific is investigated.²⁵⁰ The author of this dissertation has been a researcher of this project since 2006 and has benefited from the access to the primary data.

Between 2004 and 2008,²⁵¹ the media analysis of *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*

²⁵⁰ The research project was first initiated by the National Centre for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, New Zealand in 2002. It identifies the external image of the EU and the attitude and opinions on the ASEM process in Asia-Pacific. For more details, see <www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz/>, Martin Holland, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Z. Nowak and Natalia Chaban eds., *the EU Through the Eyes of Asia: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand* (Singapore-Warsaw: Asia-Europe Foundation-Zakład Główny Uniwersytetu, 2007).

²⁵¹ Australia and New Zealand have also been included in the project. However, they were not part of ASEM until ASEM8 in October 2010, two years after the major part of media analysis of this research was completed (which was in 2008). Therefore, Australia and New Zealand were not included in this

studied the most widely circulated dailies, the most widely circulated English-language dailies, the most popular business dailies and the leading prime-time television news bulletins with the highest audience rating in eight Asian ASEM countries (China (including mainland China and Hong Kong SAR), Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korean, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, all of whom were ASEM members when the study took place). To overcome the multiple language challenges involved in the dataset, this research only looks at the English-language dailies, namely: *China Daily*, *South China Morning Post*, *Jakarta Post*, *Japan Times*, *Manila Bulletin*, *Korean Herald*, *Strait Times*, *Bangkok Post* and *Vietnam News*.

This research is well aware of the pitfalls of the dependence on the English-language papers, which are not the most widely circulated in Asian countries as English is not the native language. Also, their target readership may not be the local community as the local newspapers do. Nevertheless, owing to language limitation, this research can only rely on English-language newspapers in order to generate a cross-country dataset for comparison. As two sides of the same coin, there are strengths of the English-language dailies.

In the monitored locations, English-language dailies are typically read by local leaders, educated elites (including students) and foreigners (either residing in an Asian location, or following local events from abroad). These English-language dailies are also read by media professionals from outside the locality as a guide for external newsmakers in reporting domestic current events. Such newspapers tend to employ

media analysis. The project expanded in 2009 to cover Malaysia, India and the Macau SAR; in 2011 it added also Russia to the list. However, as these two phases were conducted after the major part of media analysis of this research was completed these four locations were excluded in this research.

both local and foreign journalists and editors with proficiency in English as well as extensive international experiences. Due to the profile of their readership and staff, English-language dailies in the Asian locations create a unique forum to exchange ideas on regional and international developments. As a window between the local Asian societies and the international arena, the English-language press tends to feature more international events and their impacts, ASEM included. Additionally, most of these chosen papers are the longest-established and most prestigious English-language newspaper in the selected locations as identified by the respective native researchers employed by the *EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project.

Regarding data collection, this study originally planned to extract the ASEM-related news items directly from *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* 2006 dataset and search for other news items from an online news archive, FACTIVA.²⁵² FACTIVA was chosen because of its massive collection of sources,²⁵³ user friendliness and the free access provided by the University of Canterbury's Library.

However, it was found that the reportage from several of the abovementioned news outlets were not available. News published by *Japan Times* before 2002 was not available on FACTIVA, nor did the daily's official online archive provide a complete collection of the publication. Similarly, news items published before February 2002 on *Manila Bulletin* were not available in FACTIVA. The paper's online archive only provides news written since 2009. In the Vietnamese case, data from *Vietnam News* was not accessible from FACTIVA: nor is there any official online archive for

²⁵² FACTIVA is owned by Done Jones & Company. Established in 1999, it offers "a premier collection of the world's top media outlets, trade and consumer publications, and thousands of Web sites", according to <www.dowjones.com/factiva/features.asp>.

²⁵³ From newspapers to academic journals, magazines, television, radio transcripts to photos.

Vietnam News. Two other online news archive, Press Display and Wise News, were also checked. However, news from *Japan Times*, *Manila Bulletin* and *Vietnam News* between 1996 and 2012 were still not available. Consequently, these three dailies have been excluded from this research. In addition, news from *the Korea Herald* published before 1998 was not available on FACTIVA, while the paper's official online archive is not available in English. Thus, the analysis of *the Korea Herald* excludes coverage of ASEM1. In the light of these limitations, this research based the media portrayal analysis of ASEM on six English-language dailies, three from Northeast Asia and three from Southeast Asia, as listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Information of the monitored English-language dailies

Locations	Dailies chosen	Found-ed	Circulation	Time-frame	no. of ASEM news collected	Sources of news
Mainland China	<i>China Daily</i>	1981	800 000 ²⁵⁴	ASEM1-ASEM9	83	<i>the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific</i> for ASEM6; FACTIVA for other periods
Hong Kong, China	<i>South China Morning Post</i>	1903	107 080 ²⁵⁵		88	
South Korea	<i>Korea Herald</i>	1953	50% market share ²⁵⁶	ASEM2 - ASEM9	216	
Singapore	<i>Strait Times</i>	1845	365 800 ²⁵⁷	ASEM1 -	191	
Thailand	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	1946	65 000 ²⁵⁸		246	
Indonesia	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	1983	50 000 ²⁵⁹	ASEM9	80	

²⁵⁴ *China Daily* official website, About Us, <www.chinadaily.com.cn/static_e/2011/about.html> (accessed 4 March 2011).

²⁵⁵ *South China Morning Post*, Our Business, <www.scmpgroup.com/business/scmpsm.html> (accessed 4 March 2009).

²⁵⁶ It also noted that “The Korea Herald has firmly established itself as the largest English-newspaper in Korea.” *Korea Herald* official website, business, <company.heraldm.com/eng/business/newspaper.html> (accessed 22 December 2011).

²⁵⁷ *Strait Times* official website, About Us, (accessed 22 December 2011) <www.straittimes.com/STI/STIMEDIA/sp/html/customer-care/customer-care.html?id=0>.

²⁵⁸ *Bangkok Post*, Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting of Shareholders, 11 April 2008, <www.bangkokpost.com/AGM2007/MinutesOfAGM2008EN.pdf> (accessed 22 December 2011).

²⁵⁹ *Project Syndicate*, <www.project-syndicate.org/member_papers/i> (accessed 22 December 2011).

Importantly, observations on the ASEM6-news from *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* showed that the news media's attention on the process concentrated overwhelmingly around the few weeks when the official summit took place. Hence, a new expanded dataset concentrated on the 'peak' periods in ASEM's media coverage – one month before the ASEM summit took place to one week after the two-day summit had been held. Based on this methodology, a total of 904 news items were collected and analysed.

Table 3.2: 'Periods' of the media data collection

Summit	Period for news analysis	No. of news items found
ASEM1	1 February – 9 March 1996	212
ASEM2	3 March – 11 April 1998	122
ASEM3	20 September – 28 October 2000	207
ASEM4	23 August – 1 October 2002	53
ASEM5	8 September – 16 October 2004	57
ASEM6	10 August – 18 September 2006	52
ASEM7	24 September – 1 November 2008	104
ASEM8	4 September – 12 October 2010	35
ASEM9	5 October – 13 November 2012	62

The EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific used local researchers in each location who were trained to collect and analyse the EU or ASEM-related news items using an identical methodology. Taking a news item as the unit of analysis, trained researchers were responsible for coding various aspects of each news report including: centrality (whether ASEM is the main, secondary or minor focus of the news); evaluation (whether ASEM is reported positively, neutrally or negatively); the actors (individual countries, national leaders, regional organisations or non-state actors) and the relevant actions mentioned (political, economic, social, environmental or development). The coding was recorded on a standardised Excel template. As this doctoral research is interested mainly in the actors and actions reported in the ASEM-related news, the

relevant data from these news analysis were extracted and exported to a modified Excel template for further study. The key focus is placed on the actions taken place during the ASEM summits and on their sidelines.

To expand this existing dataset, this research sourced news items referencing ‘Asia Europe Meeting’, ‘ASEM’ and ‘Asia Europe Summit’ (these are the search terms used in *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*) for different ASEM years using FACTIVA’s search function. The news items identified by the search engine were downloaded, analysed, coded using the same protocols, and then entered into the Excel template mentioned above.

All news items collected were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis includes the systematic recording of the length of each news item (number of words), source of information (whether written by employed journalists, editors, or sourced from news agencies, etc), and coded for centrality (major, secondary or minor), thematic focus (summary of what the news story is about), ASEM relevant actions and evaluation (positive, negative or neutral). In addition, two special categories - ‘sideline meetings’ and ‘official visits’– were introduced to record all the sideline meetings and official state visits of ASEM partners which took place on the margins of the official summits. The content of these sideline meetings, when reported, are also analysed. Consequently, this dataset contains: information on the number of pieces of news featuring ASEM; the frequency of appearance of each ASEM partner; and, information on sideline meetings that took place on the fringe of the official summits and the ASEM partners involved. This data is elaborated in Chapters 7 and 8.

Remarkably, this research is the first attempt to include systematic media analysis on ASEM-related reportage. Rather than attempting to cover all ASEM partner countries, it realistically concentrates on the Asian media outlets which are found available. Due to the different media environment and the coverage of *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project, no English-language daily from the European countries is included. If the constraint in time and language can be overcome, future research should examine the news coverage of ASEM in European news media. To complement the unique media insight in this research, it employed also primary data generated by several public opinion surveys to illustrate how the general public receive and conceive the establishment and development of the ASEM process.

3.5. Public opinion survey

Public opinion survey here refers to the collection of opinion on a large scale among a randomly selected sample from the general public.²⁶⁰ Various methods are available to administer a survey, namely mail, telephone, internet or face-to-face. As it is impossible to talk to every individual in the population, a representative sample of the population can be utilised by researchers to make generalisations about the whole population. During the survey, all respondents are asked to answer identical questions, in identical order and are given identical options to choose from. As a result, the findings can be standardised and analysed with the aid of statistical tools. Manheim and Rich defined survey research as ‘a method of data collection in which information is obtained directly from individual persons who are selected so as to provide a basis

²⁶⁰ Summary of works including: Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 129-34; Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 97-102; Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research* (2008), 270-1.

for making inferences about some larger populations'.²⁶¹ Accordingly, surveys reveal perceptions, opinions, attitude, and behavioural reports of the respondents. In public surveys, the unit of analysis is an individual from the general public. The results provide an 'accurate snapshot of conditions or opinions at the time the survey was carried out.'²⁶²

As stated by Babbie, surveys were particularly useful in describing the characteristics of a large population, as the large number of cases covered favour descriptive and explanatory analyses.²⁶³ He argued that 'survey research goes a long way toward eliminating unreliability in observations made by the researcher.'²⁶⁴ However, public opinion surveying is expensive and time consuming, which normally constitutes a methodology beyond the scope of a single researcher. Owing to the rigid structure (identical questionnaire), surveying has to sacrifice the richness of the data. In Babbie's term, 'standardised questionnaire items often represent the least common denominator in assessing people's attitude, orientations, circumstances, and experiences',²⁶⁵ the responses collected can only be regarded as 'approximate indicators'.²⁶⁶ Besides, unlike archival research and content analysis, surveys are not unobtrusive, for instance, a respondent may not have heard of a topic before being interviewed.

²⁶¹ Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 129.

²⁶² Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 137.

²⁶³ Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research* (2008), 303 & 270.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 304

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 303; see also Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 137.

²⁶⁶ Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research* (2008), 304.

Normally, the high costs involved in a survey mean that it is impossible for an individual researcher (particularly students) to conduct a large-scale public opinion survey. Fortunately, this research has access to the primary findings from two comparative projects, *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* and its 'mirror' project *Asia in the eyes of Europe*,²⁶⁷ both incorporated public opinion survey components. Each survey had two questions related to the perceptions of ASEM; the responses to these questions constitute the primary data used in this doctoral research.

Since launched in 2002, the on-going *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project has modified its questionnaire several times. To ensure comparability, the public survey data used in this research are limited to the surveys conducted in 2008 (in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam), 2010 (in India, Macau and Malaysia) and 2012 (mainland China, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand), where identical questionnaires were used. A professional social research company was hired to conduct these surveys. The sample size in 2008 and 2010 phases was set at 400 respondents per location, sustaining the margin of error at $\pm 4.9\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. The sample size for 2012 increased to 1000 respondents in each location, sustaining the margin of error at $\pm 3\%$ with the same confidence level of 95%. In total, the dataset included 9448 completed surveys (Table 3.3).

²⁶⁷ It is a much younger research, started in mid-2010. The two-year project is funded by the Asia-Europe Foundation in partnership with the German Council on Foreign Relations, National Centre for Research on Europe (University of Canterbury) and Tsinghua University. It examines European public, media, and opinion leaders' perceptions of Asia. See also <www.asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/education/1148-asia-in-the-eyes-of-europe>.

Table 3.3: Sample sizes of the Asian public survey in 2008, 2010 and 2012

Locations	Date	No. of respondents
Indonesia	November 2008	405
The Philippines		400
Vietnam		400
India	February 2010	403
Macau, China		400
Malaysia		400
Mainland China	March 2012	1009
India		1028
Japan		1000
South Korea		1002
Malaysia		1000
Singapore		1000
Thailand		1001
Total		9448

The surveys conducted in 2008 and 2010 employed telephone-based structured interviews, with one exception - Indonesia - which required face-to-face interviews due to limited telephone accessibility in the country. Although telephone-interview demands more time and money compared with other methodologies such as online surveys or mailing, it offers a higher guarantee for each interview to be completed. Compared with face-to-face interviews, it minimises financial and human resources.

In the 2012 survey, an online-panel was employed: this method (like mailing or emailing respondents a self-administered survey) is one of the cheapest, fastest and most convenient ways to administer surveys. However, there are shortcomings including the inability to guarantee the completion of all questions and the possible under-representativeness of the online panel for certain groups in the population (older generations and poor typically), especially in places where internet penetration of low.

Two questions from *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* survey informed this study:

- Question 9: Are you aware of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process?
- Question 10: Which of the EU countries do you have personal or professional connections/ties with?

The ‘mirror’ project *Asia in the Eyes of Europe* covered eight EU member states (Australia, Belgium,²⁶⁸ Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Romania and the UK). Its public opinion survey was completed in February 2011 and used online-panel structured interviews. Again, the project hired a professional social research company to conduct the survey, with sample sizes varying from country to country to reflect the population composition of the EU (Table 3.4). The margin of error ranged from $\pm 3\%$ to $\pm 7\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. In total, the dataset profiled 6155 completed interviews.

Table 3.4: Public opinion sample in eight EU member states

EU member states	Population in 2011²⁶⁹	No. of respondents
Austria	8.40 million	496
Belgium (French-speaking area)	10.95 million	224
Belgium (Flemish-speaking area)		368
Denmark	5.56 million	293
France	65.05 million	906
Germany	81.75 million	1033
Italy	60.63 million	930
Romania	21.41 million	451
UK	62.44 million	1454
Total	-	6155

Identical questions were posed to the respondents in the respective native language of each location. Two questions from *Asia in the eyes of Europe* survey were extracted in this research:

²⁶⁸ The French-speaking and Flemish-speaking area are sub-divided into two cases in the research, responsible by two separate Belgium researchers.

²⁶⁹ Sourcing from Eurostat, epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00001&plugin=0 > (accessed 3 January 2012).

- Question 6a: How familiar are you with the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (options: not familiar at all, not very familiar, quite familiar or very familiar)?
- Question 7: With which of the following countries (ASEM Asian countries were listed) do you have personal or professional links with?

Although the questions in the two surveys seem similar, the findings are not deemed as comparable. The concepts of ‘being aware of ASEM’ and ‘being familiar with ASEM’ are treated as two different aspects in this research. The respective findings are discussed in Chapter 8 with regard to the engagement of the ASEM process to the general public.

Apart from these two projects, this study also explored the conclusions published by the Asia-Europe Meeting Research Team of the European Studies Centre, China Foreign Affairs University in their public opinion survey conducted in 2006.²⁷⁰ This particular research fixed its interest on ASEM. Its public survey collected 970 questionnaires completed by students from four prestigious universities in Beijing (Tsinghua University, Peking University, Renmin University of China and China Foreign Affairs University). The results are used for secondary data analysis in this research.

Secondary analysis here refers to the re-use and re-analysis of data collected and processed by other researchers, usually with a different purpose.²⁷¹ In the eighteen-question survey, the Chinese students were first tested on their knowledge on

²⁷⁰ Zhu, “China” (2006), 4-38. The research was commissioned and supported by the Japan Centre for International Exchange. Similar to *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*, this project structured with public opinion, policy-makers opinion and media representation.

²⁷¹ Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*, (1995), 150-2; Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 43-4; Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research*, (2008), 304.

ASEM, then their general perceptions on the process were explored. The study concluded that the Chinese university students had minimal knowledge on ASEM, but their views on ASEM and the role of Chinese in the process were positive. In particular, data generated by the question ‘Do you know ASEM? (options: don’t know, not familiar, familiar and know well)’ will be used in Chapter 8 in parallel to the public opinion data generated by the projects *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific*.

To date, the survey conducted by the Asia-Europe Meeting Research Team of the European Studies Centre in 2006 is the only known attempt at conducting a large-scale survey focusing on ASEM. However, the results were limited to one particular cohort (university students) in one country (China), indeed in one city (Beijing). By bringing together existing public opinion data from different ASEM countries and projects for comparison, this research significantly advances the empirical study of ASEM.

As mentioned above, the rigidly structured nature of public survey restricts the richness and vividness of responses collected. As Manheim and Rich pointed out, this confines ‘the researcher’s opportunities to learn what respondents consider relevant or important and to gain new theoretical insights.’²⁷² To complement this shortcoming, this research also includes data from semi-structured and non-structured face-to-face interviews with decision-makers and key informants.

3.6. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviewing is one commonly used method of data collection in political

²⁷² Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 162.

science and social science. A targeted respondent is invited for a fixed-topic conversation with the interviewer(s).²⁷³ It can be semi-structured or unstructured, depending on the protocol prepared by the interviewer and the degree of control the interviewer exerts on the conversation. The interview set-up and organisation is an elaborate process entailing designing a questionnaire or protocol, identifying and accessing the target sample, conducting actual interviews, transcribing the responses and analysing the data. Due to the high costs both in time and money (for recording equipment, transportation of interviewees or interviewers, and staff employment), the number of interviewees is usually limited. Moreover, securing interview with particular informants, especially elites who are typically time-poor, is a difficult task. Persistency and personal contacts offer some possible resolutions. Selected interviewees are typically experts, key informants or decision makers, whose responses then become the unit of analysis.

This research involved unstructured interviews with four key informants who worked for various ASEM pillars and activities. They were able to provide unique insider information. A key informant here refers to a member of the particular group who possess direct information about the group.

Additionally, the responses from the 242 national elite interviews conducted in the course of *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project are also used. Elites are usually ‘in privileged position as far as knowledge is concerned’²⁷⁴ and ‘have gained their

²⁷³ Summary of works including: Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 155-7; Bill Gillham, *The Research Interview* (London and New York, Continuum, 2000), 1-2; Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 231-47; Babbie, *The Basic of Social Research* (2008), 291-5.

²⁷⁴ Gillham, *The Research Interview* (2000), 81.

knowledge by virtue of their position and experience in the community, their established networks of relationships, their ability to express themselves orally, and their broad understanding of their community'²⁷⁵ They are believed to be more influential on decision-making process for a society than the general public. Burnham *et al.* argued that since 'many political decisions are taken by small groups of highly qualified and knowledgeable individuals'; elite interview 'remains the most appropriate technique to explore this private world'.²⁷⁶

Among various interviewing techniques, an in-depth interview is the most informative and direct. This type of interview with elites or key informants provides crucial information which would otherwise be unavailable. These insiders' knowledge and shared special expertise are insightful for researchers. Burnham *et al.* saw elite interviewing as bridge bringing together the practitioner and the academic for 'hopefully fruitful mutual dialogue'.²⁷⁷

On the negative side, the representativeness and validity of the findings are always challenged as the elite interview sample is usually small, especially compared with the public opinion survey which gather hundreds or thousands of responses. Besides, the key informants are deeply involved in the respective areas and may possess very specific, if not highly-specialised (and thus narrow) views. To overcome these shortcomings, Manheim and Rich advised against taking what interviewees says as factual data, relying on a single interviewee on one issue, or using information

²⁷⁵ Stephen L. Schensul, Jean J. Schensul and Margaret Diane LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaire* (Walnut Creek Ca: AltaMira Press, 1999), 84.

²⁷⁶ Burnham *et al.*, *Research Methods in Politics* (2008), 247.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 304.

obtained from elite interviews without verification.²⁷⁸

After taking into account time, financial resources and access opportunities, this research incorporates data from first-hand interviews with four key informants whose work was either highly connected to or was involved closely in the ASEM process. An unstructured style was chosen: the conversations were guided by a general objective and the questions posed were not fixed beforehand. As stated by Manheim and Rich, this approach offers great opportunity for the researcher to ‘learn from respondents and acquire unexpected information that can lead to truly new ways of understanding the events being studied’.²⁷⁹ However, an eight-question questionnaire was pretested and prepared as a protocol and approved by the Human Ethics Committee of University of Canterbury before any interviews were scheduled (attached in the Appendix).

During the actual interviews, this questionnaire acted as a guiding protocol. In each interview, according to the expertise of the particular interviewee, a different combination of questions was asked, in a different sequence. Owing to the preferences indicated by the four informants, the interviews were not recorded. Information given by the interviewees was noted by hand by the author during the course of the interviews. The responses were long and informative, and as such were unsuitable for structured coding and summarise. Instead, qualitative and interpretative analysis was applied.

²⁷⁸ Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (1995), 162.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The first interview, on 8 September 2010, was with one of the two junior experts (Miss Wei Nian) in the Technical Support team for the ASEM process set up by the European Commission between 1 January and 31 December 2010. The key objectives of this special team were to support ASEM coordination, improve ASEM transparency and visibility, as well as facilitate and monitor the implementation of ASEM initiatives.²⁸⁰ The interview concentrated on the role of the European Commission in the ASEM process and the dissimilarity in commitment between different ASEM partners. Five questions (numbers 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8) from the questionnaire were posed. The information about the changes of ASEM's coordination mechanism obtained was compared with that from the official sources for verification, and is used in Chapter 5 (related to ASEM's institutional design). The comments about the role of the European Commission and the activeness of other ASEM partners are incorporated into the section about different degrees of engagement by ASEM partners in Chapter 6.

The second interview was with Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe, the head of the ASEM8 Task Force which was created by the Belgian Government for the preparation of ASEM8 in Brussels. Owing to his busy-schedule, the interview, on 16 September 2010 in Brussels immediately after an ASEM8 public seminar, was rather brief and informal. It lasted for about ten minutes and no special protocol or questionnaire was used. The interview concentrated on the ASEM8 Task Force's preparation on the Brussels summit as well as the accession of Australia, New Zealand and Russia. The information shared by Ambassador de Crombrughe, entrusted as official facts, is used in the explanation of the regional coordination

²⁸⁰ List in the *Specific Terms of Reference* issued by the European Commission, a document given to the author by Miss Wei.

system (Chapter 5) and the influence of the Lisbon Treaty on the EU side participation in ASEM (Chapter 6).

The third key informant interview was undertaken in July 2011, with a senior official from the European Commission with extensive ASEM experience who requested anonymity. In the one-hour unstructured interview, he was asked to talk about his ASEM-related work experience. The informant provided the author with invaluable insider information about the evolution of the ASEM process, the conflicting views between ASEM partners and the role of the European Commission in the process. Such information serves as unique insights to the in-depth understanding of ASEM. Although the interviewee requested that no direct quotes be used, this special contribution was helpful and provided complementary information and ideas for this research to develop arguments about the different degree of engagement of ASEM partners (Chapter 6) and the participation of civil society actors (Chapter 8).

In contrast with the face-to-face context of the first three interviews, the fourth was conducted via internet audio conferencing because the interviewee and interviewer could not physically meet. The key informant was the former Director of the Intellectual Exchange Department of Asia-Europe Foundation, Miss Sol Iglesias, interviewed on 12 December 2011. The interview lasted for forty-five minutes and the questions posed to her concentrated on the role of different groups of civil society actors in ASEM's unofficial track and the role of ASEF as a bridge between different types of ASEM stakeholders (including a modified version of Question 7). This insider information from the sole official institution of the ASEM process was especially helpful for the examination of different kinds of actors involved in ASEM in this research (Chapter 8).

In addition to these interview data collected by the author, primary interview data from two questions of *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* project are also used. The two selected questions in the semi-structured stakeholder interviews are the ones focused on the ASEM process:

- Q11: How would you describe the impact of the ASEM process on interactions between the EU and your country?
- Q12: Last year/two years ago, there was an ASEM meeting in Helsinki/Beijing/Brussels in September/October. How would you describe the effect of that meeting on your country?

In order to draw comparable and parallel insights with the public opinion survey data, these stakeholder interviews are drawn from the 2008, 2010 and 2011/2012 studies.²⁸¹ The 2011/2012 round offered this research the latest insights into the awareness of and views on the ASEM process among Asian stakeholders. In total, findings from 413 completed interviews are analysed and utilised in this dissertation (Table 3.5).²⁸²

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, face-to-face format with national elites from four distinct cohorts (civil society, business, media and political/governmental) in the selected ASEM Asian countries. Local pre-trained researchers identified, contacted and interviewed the national elites in the respective local languages. It is believed that such an approach encourages a comprehensive and informative response from the interviewees. On average, the interviews lasted between forty and forty-five minutes. The questionnaires used were approved by the Human Ethic Committee of University of Canterbury, and pretested in the pilot stage of the

²⁸¹ The Indonesian data is not available because the translation process has not yet been completed.

²⁸² Nine interviews were conducted in Malaysia but results were not yet translated into English.

project.

Table 3.5: The number of elites interviewed in the six Asian locations.

Locations	Date	No. of interviewed elites in each cohort				
		Political	Business	Civil society	Media	Total
The Philippines	May-September 2008	9	7	8	7	31
Vietnam		8	8	9	8	33
India	February-June 2010	8	10	10	10	38
Macau, China		12	8	10	10	40
Malaysia		14	7	9	10	40
Mainland China	April-July 2011	15	18	13	14	60
India	October 2011-	8	6	10	10	34
Japan	March 2012	10	10	10	10	40
Singapore		7	9	8	6	30
South Korea		10	10	10	10	40
Thailand		6	4	9	8	27
Total	-	107	97	106	103	413

The sample per country ranged between thirty and sixty (Table 3.5). After the interviews, the interviewers were also responsible for transcribing and translating the interviews into English and entering the data into a standard Excel template, with each interviewee representing a data point. Having the same researcher to conduct, transcribe and translate the interview further assures the quality of the data, because he/she has first-hand memory and understanding of the course the actual interview.

It should be noted that the responses to the two ASEM-focused questions were not as informative as expected; many interviewees confessed that they had no knowledge about the ASEM process hence could not comment on it. Consequently, this study attempted to use these data quantitatively to reveal the pre-existing level of ASEM awareness among national elites. To further understand the engagement of elites in the Asia-EU relations, findings from two other questions are analysed:

- Q1: Could you describe the nature of your professional involvement with the EU?
- Q16: Do you have personal contacts within Europe (friends, business, family, travel)? If yes, which countries?

The responses were also used quantitatively to distinguish between those elites who had ties with the EU from those who did not. These quantitative results inform the exploration of non-state actors' involvement in ASEM (Chapter 8). Importantly, the elite and key informant interviews provide this research with a unique and substantive set of qualitative and quantitative data.

3.7. Conclusion

In order to comprehensively understand the ASEM process, a combination of various data collection and data analysis methods are employed in this research. Data collection methods from low- to high-control (exercised by the researcher) levels were used, namely archival method, media content analysis, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and survey. They generate a unique set of empirically rich data, offering both inside-out and outside-in views on the ASEM process. Viewpoints from the official documents to key informants working on ASEM, ASEM countries' national decision-makers, ASEM countries' general public as well the news media are encompassed. Such diversity of data sources and variety of data collection techniques ensure the credibility and validity of this research. In addition, this dissertation combines qualitative and quantitative analysis, while the two mutually complementing each other. Thus, this research does not only add to the existing work on ASEM – which is based mainly on indirect

observations and theoretical deductions – but also presents the most comprehensive set of empirical findings on ASEM ever collected. The application of these data is demonstrated in Chapters 5-8.

Chapter Four

The Creation of ASEM: Historical Background

4.1. Introduction

The past plays a fundamental role in the formation of the present; many thinkers and scholars stressed the importance to study history in order to understand the present and the future. George Santayana wrote that ‘those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’ Thomas Hobbes stated ‘no man can have in his mind a conception of the future, for the future is not yet. But of our conceptions of the past, we make a future; or rather, call past, future relatively.’²⁸³ Moreover, Gilbert and Stearns suggest that understanding history is crucial to the study of current international affairs.²⁸⁴ Therefore, in order to understand the relations between Asia and Europe at present, this research first overviews the history of the interactions between the two continents.

The historical review in this chapter comprises two parts. The first one provides a brief overview of the historical background of interaction between Asia and Europe after the Second World War which gave rise to the current Asia-Europe relations as well as the creation of the ASEM process. The second part recalls the highs and lows

²⁸³ Thomas Hobbes, *The Element of Law: Human nature and De corpore politico*, ed. with an introduction by J.C.A. Gaskin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 32.

²⁸⁴ Arthur N. Gilbert, “International Relations and the Relevance of History,” *International Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1968): 351-359; Peter N. Stearns, *Meaning over Memory: Recasting the Teaching of History and Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

of the ASEM process from the first Summit in Bangkok to the most recent Vientiane Summit.

Taking into account that either ‘Asia’ or ‘Europe’ have an universally agreed definition, this chapter makes no attempt to fix such a definition. Instead, the chapter focuses on the groupings in the inaugural ASEM process. ‘Europe’ consists of the fifteen EU member states, while ‘Asia’ comprises the seven ASEAN member states in 1996 plus China, Japan, and South Korea (the ‘+3 countries’). Interestingly, while the name ‘Europe’ was found originated from ancient Greek mythology, the idea of ‘Asia’ is not coined in Asian but came from Europe. As reiterated in other studies, the ideas of continental divisions as well as the naming of different regions were inventions of ancient Greece.²⁸⁵ In ancient Greece, ‘Asia’ originated from the notion ‘Oriental land’.²⁸⁶ The notions ‘Europe’, ‘Asia’ and other regions like ‘Africa’ were artificially created to define the ‘we’ and ‘the others’. Thereby, Asia and the Asian have been understood as ‘the other’ to the Europeans, and vice-versa. The following section provides a concise summary of the contemporary history of interactions between these two regions.

4.2. Historical Background behind the birth of ASEM

4.2.1. Colonisation and decolonisation Balme and Bridges remarked, ‘in a long-term perspective, Europe and Asia did not primarily interact as regions, but as states, missions, trade ventures and even individuals pursuing imperial and colonial

²⁸⁵ Karoline Postel-Vinay, “The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the ‘Europe and the Rest’ Divide,” *Geopolitics* 12, no.4 (2007): 560; Peter Bugge, “Asia and the Idea of Europe- European and its Others” (workshop paper, *Asian Values and Vietnam’s Development in Comparative Perspective*, Hanoi, 24-26 March 1999): 2; Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 21-23.

²⁸⁶ Postel-Vinay, “The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the ‘Europe and the Rest’ Divide” (2007), 560.

projects.²⁸⁷ The initial relations between Asia and Europe were established by conquest and trade expansion in Ancient Times.²⁸⁸ These were followed by trade and exploration during the medieval period in which European explorers travelled to the East on diplomatic, trade, and/or religious mission. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, another form of interaction was introduced by the European powers – Imperialism, started by the Portuguese Empire.²⁸⁹

Driven by the quest for natural resources, Asian goods (namely silk, porcelain and textile), overseas markets and power, other major European powers (the Spanish, British, French, and Dutch) soon joined the endeavour and claimed colonies in Asia as well as other continents (Africa, America and Australasia). The Portuguese domination continued until the seventeenth century after which the Dutch and British began to gain more leverage through the establishment of East India Companies and the opium trade.²⁹⁰ Eventually, the majority of countries in Asia were colonised by European imperial powers,²⁹¹ with the exception of Thailand, Japan, the two Koreas and most regions of Mainland China. The Portuguese colonised India, Macau, and East Timor. The Spanish ruled the Philippines. The British occupied Brunei, Hong Kong, India, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. The French

²⁸⁷ Richard Balme and Brian Bridges, “Introducing Asia, Europe and the Challenges of Globalization”, in *Europe-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralisms*, Richard Balme and Brian Bridges eds. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: 2-3.

²⁸⁹ Arthur Cotterell, *Western Power in Asia: Its Slow Rise and Swift Fall, 1415 – 1999* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

²⁹⁰ Helen Delpar ed., *The Discoverers: An Encyclopedia of Explorers and Exploration* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), 249-51; Cotterell, *Asia: A Concise History* (2011), 202-212, 302-307.

²⁹¹ Cotterell, *Asia: A Concise History* (2011), 202-212, 302-307, 407-419; Cotterell, *Western Power in Asia: Its Slow Rise and Swift Fall, 1415 – 1999* (2011), 53-101.

ruled Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The Dutch colonised India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. The Age of Imperialism marked an imbalance of power as well as antagonistic relations between the dominating European colonial rulers and their Asian subjects. Eventually, these relations entered a stage of reflux when colonisation came to a halt towards the end of the nineteenth century.

By the mid-twentieth century, after the two devastating World Wars, the European powers were too preoccupied by internal politics and financial burdens to further sustain their colonies. Meanwhile, nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments among the colonies grew. The post-World Wars international community also opposed imperialism. Consequently, decolonisation started. The process varied in each Asian colony. While some had to fight long and hard for independence (namely India, Indonesia and Vietnam), others' roads to autonomy were not so gruelling (such as Cambodia and the two Special Administrative Regions of China). Eventually, the Philippines obtained independence in 1946; Myanmar in 1947; India in 1948; Indonesia in 1949; Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in 1954; Malaysia in 1957; Singapore in 1965; Timor in 1974; and Brunei in 1984. Sovereignties of Hong Kong and Macau were returned to China in 1997 and 1999 respectively.²⁹²

In the second half of the twentieth century, the newly established Asian countries were immersed in state-building. Meanwhile, the European countries concentrated on reconstruction at home and peace-keeping within their own regions. Apart from interactions between the newly formed sovereignties and their former European rulers,

²⁹² Balme and Bridges, "Introducing Asia, Europe and the Challenges of Globalization", (2008) 3; Preston Peter W., *National Past in Europe and East Asia*, (New York: Routledge, 2010): 154-5.

direct interactions between Asian and European states diminished. Asia-Europe relations waned.

The withdrawal of the Europeans provided room for the two new superpowers, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, to engage with Asia. Under the Cold War bipolarism, non-communist countries like Japan, South Korea and the Philippines became strategic allies of the US. The US army built military bases in these countries. On the other hand, communist governments including those in China and Vietnam aligned themselves with the former Soviet Union. Because of the communist link, many of the Central and Eastern European countries also developed relationships with the communist states in Asia. These political alliances extended into the economic field. Apart from intra-regional trade, Asian countries focused on trade with either the US or the former Soviet Union.

4.2.2. Regionalism and inter-regionalism since 1950s Since the 1950s Western European countries have devoted much time and effort on regional integration. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded in 1952, which became the European Economic Community (EEC or European Community, EC) in 1957, and finally, the European Union in 1993. The project of regionalism was necessary for a number of reasons: first, to prevent a third war within Europe (the reconciliation between France and Germany was especially important in this regard); second, to increase and manage the interdependence among member states by fostering intra-regional trade; third, to allow the recovery of Europe from the destruction of the wars; and fourth, to expand Eastward and counter Communism from the East. Subsequently, members of the EU inevitably became inward-looking. Regarding its external relations, Western European states mainly focused on their ties with the US

and their former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (the so-called the ACP region).²⁹³ As pointed out by Murray, in the past few decades ‘Asia has often been off the EU radar screen.’²⁹⁴

On the Asian side, a few regional integration projects also emerged. During the early post-colonial era, inter-state relations within Southeast Asia were unstable, marred by territorial disputes, religious conflicts and economic competition. In 1967, five Southeast Asian nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) sought regional peace and stability by creating a regional institution – ASEAN. The association later expanded to include Brunei Darussalam in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. It was not until much later (1985) that the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was founded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and later joined by Afghanistan in 2007. One key objective was to foster intra-regional cooperation so as to accelerate the economic and social development of the participating South Asian countries. Notably, no similar attempt has been made among Northeast Asian countries to build regionalism.

The European Community sought to establish ties with these two regional organisations in Asia. Motivated by economic and political interests, the EC and ASEAN began the informal EC-ASEAN ministerial dialogue in 1972. It was later replaced by the ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in 1978. The *Cooperation*

²⁹³ Bridges, *Europe and the Challenge of the Asia Pacific: Change, Continuity and Crisis* (1999), 147-9; Rüländ, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship: (2001): 16; Gilson, “Trade relations between Europe and East Asia” (2004): 186; Timo Kivimäki, “ASEM, Multilateralism, and the Security Agenda”, in *Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations*, Gaens ed. (2008), 50.

²⁹⁴ Murray Philomena, “Europe and Asia: Two Regions in Flux”, in *Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux*, Murray Philomena (ed) (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11.

Agreement between the Member Countries of ASEAN and European Community was signed in 1980 to institutionalise these relations. Economic and development had been the key focus in ASEAN-EU interactions, which resulted in a donor-recipient relationship with the European side as donor from financial, developmental to assistance in regional institution building.²⁹⁵ In the early 1980s, common threat of the Soviet expansion brought the EC and ASEAN closer together politically to support each other's position in Vietnam invasion of Cambodia and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet, in the early 1990s, such common threat disappeared after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Disputes on the treatment of Timor and Myanmar as well as the introduction of policy of conditionalities by the EC worsened the relations. Other than these group-to-group endeavours, not much interactions were developed between the EC and individual countries in Southeast Asia.²⁹⁶ By and large, in comparison to the EC's engagement with other regions (such as Latin America and ACP as mentioned before), ASEAN was in low priority.²⁹⁷

With SAARC, which was founded in 1985, the EC signed a memorandum of understanding in 1986 and started a dialogue in 1998. Most countries in SAARC were regarded as underdeveloped and in need of financial aid from Europe.²⁹⁸ Similar to the case of its Southeast Asian counterpart, SAARC and the EC were not at the top of

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*; see also Forster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach," (2000): 791.

²⁹⁶ Yeo Lay Hwee, "The Origins and Development of ASEM and EU-East Asia Relations", in *Europe and Asia: Regions in Flux*, Murray P. (ed), (2006), 104.

²⁹⁷ Forster, "Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach," (2000): 791-3; Yeo, "The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process" (2007): 178.

²⁹⁸ Shada Islam, "Funds from the fortress", *Far East Economic Review*, pp. 62, 15 February 1990; Shada Islam, "Wake-up Call", *Far East Economic Review*, p. 18-9, 4 August 1994.

each other's priority list.

In terms of bilateral relations, between the 1960s and the 1980s, many Western European economies traded extensively with Japan, which had become a strong economy. However, due to a persistent trade surplus favouring Japan, the relations were dominated by trade disputes. At the regional level, as early as in 1959, Japan Ambassador to Belgium was accredited as Japan's first representation to the European Community. The EC opened its delegation office to Tokyo in 1974 to manage relations with Japan. Notably, this was the first European Commission Delegation Office to Asia. The *Joint Declaration on Relations between the European Community and its Member States and Japan* was signed in 1991. In the same year, the bilateral EC-Japan annual summit began, making Japan the first Asian partner to hold annual summits with the Community. Still, relations between Japan and the EU as well as the EU member states have been considerably much weaker than the Japan-US special relations.

After Tokyo, the European Commission only opened other delegation offices in Asia in the 1980s. Indeed, the first ever EC representative office, called ECSC information office, was already opened in 1954 in Washington. Shortly after this, the Community set up two liaison offices in Santiago and London in 1956, with the former one handling relations with Latin America. To maintain the diplomatic relations and development cooperation with the ACP states (African, Caribbean and Pacific), the EC established forty-one delegations of the Commission in the ACP in 1960s and 1970s. It was not until 1976, when a new Asia and Latin America development budget came into force as well as the European Commission gained bigger responsibilities in external trade policy, that the EC opened more Delegation offices

in Asia.²⁹⁹ These offices differed from those in the ACP countries and adopted ‘a more classically diplomatic approach’.³⁰⁰

The Delegation office of the Commission of the EC for South and Southeast Asia was opened in 1979 in Bangkok. It was responsible to manage relations with eleven countries including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In 1982, a Delegation office was established in Dhaka to cover the EC’s relations with Bangladesh. Similarly, in 1983, management of the relations with India, Bhutan and Nepal was taken over by a new Delegation office set up in Delhi. In 1985, the EC opened an office in Islamabad to foster ties with Pakistan. This office was upgraded to Delegation office in 1988. Also in 1988, a Delegation office was established in Jakarta to cover EC’s relations with Indonesia, Brunei and the ASEAN Secretariat. More Commission’s Delegation offices were opened in the 1990s and the early 2000s to manage bilateral relations between the EU and individual countries in South and Southeast Asia.

In Northeast Asia, Japan’s World War II defeat brought an end to its colonial rule in Korea. The 1950-1953 Korea War resulted in the division of the country into North and South. South Korea, officially developed as the Republic of Korea, maintains a close tie with the West especially with the US. Official diplomatic ties between the EC and South Korea began in 1963. While South Korea developed into one of the Newly Industrialised Economies in the 1970s, trade and economy became the main area of its relations with the EC. In 1983, the two started regular ministerial meeting.

²⁹⁹ European Commission, *Taking Europe to the World: 50 years of the European Commission’s External Service* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004), 24.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

A Delegation office was opened in Seoul in 1989 to manage ties with both South and North Korea. Yet, EC's engagement with North Korea only became stronger since the mid-1990s through various assistance programmes.³⁰¹ Similar to the Japanese case, two Korea's ties with the EC and its member states have been incomparable with their special relations with the US.

With China, during the Cold War, Western European countries had rather distant relations due to the difference in ideology and China's close-door policy. Although China's relation with the Soviet Union deteriorated drastically in the 1960s, due to border disputes, China did not developed close tie with Western Europe but sought rapprochement with the US. The EC only established diplomatic relation with China in 1975. The 1978 China's 'open-door' policy connected China back with the rest of the world. The *EEC-China Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement* was signed in 1985. Delegation office to China was opened in Beijing in 1988. However, the relation was suspended in 1989 as a result of the EC and its member states' disagreement on how the then Chinese government handled the Tiananmen Square incident. The EC-China relation was normalised in 1992, yet, the arm embargo imposed by the EC side remains active till now and has been a point of dispute between China and the EU.

Generally speaking, relations between Asia and Europe were distant during the Cold War era. Following the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1991, the Cold War ended and triggered major changes in international relations. The removal of the security

³⁰¹ Source: Official website of European Union Delegation to the Republic of Korea, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south_korea/eu_dprk/political_relations/index_en.htm, accessed 4th March 2011.

threat allowed an upsurge of democratisation in the ex-communist states, globalisation and regionalism.

Nevertheless, Asia and Europe did not move closer. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the common threat to the EC and its anti-communist alliance in Asia had vanished. Within Europe, West Germany entered into intensive preparation for the unification with East Germany. The EC was preoccupied with the completion of the single European market project and the institutional transformation into the European Union with two new pillars (Common Security and Foreign Policy as well as Justice and Home Affairs). The demand of intense concentration on internal affairs, together with the lack of geographical proximity and the gap in economic development, resulted in a low priority of Asia on the EC's agenda.³⁰² The increase in number of Commission Delegation offices in Asia (to the Philippines and to South Korea in 1990, and a joint Delegation to Hong Kong and Macau in 1993) did not prevent the Community from falling into relative irrelevance in Asia when compare with the heavy roles played by the US and Japan. Meanwhile, Central and Eastern European countries were busy working on economic and political development after the end of decades of Soviet control. Little attention was diverted to Asia.

4.2.3. Economic miracle in Asia During the 1980s and 1990s, many Asian economies were busy fuelling their dynamic growth and integration into the global economy. Strong Asian economies, especially Japan and the Newly Industrialised

³⁰² Rütland and Storz, "Interregionalism and interregional cooperation: the case of Asia-Europe relations" (2008), 7; Bart Gaens, "ASEM's Background and Rationale", in *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*, Bart Gaens ed. (2008), 17; Anthony Forster, "The European Union in South-east Asia: Continuity and Change in Turbulent Times," *International Affairs* 75, no.4 (1999): 744-6; University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward: An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities* (2006), 12.

Economies (NIEs)³⁰³ were seen by the Europeans as threats to their global economic dominance.³⁰⁴ Additionally, in November 1989, the majority of East Asian economies³⁰⁵ founded the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US, to boost the trans-Pacific economic ties. APEC was further strengthened when China, Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan joined, as three individual economies, in 1991; Vietnam joined in 1998. Notably, in 1993, the EU applied for an observer status in APEC but was rejected.

Following the disappearance of the common security threat, the anti-communist allies in Asia and Europe lost their strategic importance. In the early 1990s, relations between member states in the EC and the Asian economies were dominated by competition and disputes in trade. Asian countries namely Japan, South Korea and other NIEs ran trade surplus with the EC economies. EC member states complained to their Asian trade partners about the slow progress in market liberalisation and the trade barriers on European products (such as high tariff, stringent standards and testing requirements). On the other side, Asian economies complained about the anti-dumping actions imposed by the EC. Asian countries also urged European countries to extend the transfer of advanced technology and know-how to Asia. In addition, after the Cold War, the ASEAN nations devoted time and energy in enlarging the Association to embrace the ex-communist neighbours. The accession of Myanmar to ASEAN and disputes over East Timor's future further inhibited the

³⁰³ Namely South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

³⁰⁴ Richards and Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Inter-regional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe's East Asian Policy" (1999): 689.

³⁰⁵ They included Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

EC-ASEAN relationship. In South Asia, member states of the SAARC were busy developing their national economies, so little attention was paid to SAARC or SAARC-EC relations. The Asia-Europe relations did not revive until the mid-1990s.

4.2.4. The U-turn in the mid-1990s 1994 marked a new era in Asia-Europe relationship because the European Union formulated its *New Asia Strategy (NAS)*,³⁰⁶ and the idea of an inter-regional cooperative framework between Asia and Europe was first raised. It is generally agreed that ASEM was the result of a series of developments that took place between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s.

The first crucial change was the end of bipolarism which is already mentioned above. The dissolution of the Soviet Union left the world with only one superpower, the US, especially in security and military realms. As the unipolar domination lingered, other players on the international stage started worrying that the US would turn to unilateralism.³⁰⁷ Moreover, in both Asia and Europe, some countries were concerned that the US would withdraw the protection from their regions. Consequently, the idea of Asia-Europe cooperation in enhancing multilateralism so as to prevent the US from unilateralism arose. Furthermore, many Asian states started concerning about their overdependence on the US and wanted to reduce such dependence. One possible option was strengthening the tie with other powers including those from Europe. Diversification of external relations would also allow the Asian states to diversify their trading partners as well as source of foreign investment and technology.

³⁰⁶ Commission of the European Communities, *Towards a New Asia Strategy*, (1994).

³⁰⁷ Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism" (2006): 10.

Second, the 1980s witnessed drastic economic growth in Asia. Economies in Southeast Asia, China, Japan and South Korea made East Asia the most dynamic economic region in the world. However, compared with the US and Japan, the EU was slow to recognise such opportunity and has lagged behind them in trade and investment shares in East Asia.³⁰⁸ In average, by the mid-1980s, the US and Japan consumed 41% and 22% of the total exports from East Asia; while the EC countries accounted only for 14%.³⁰⁹ Regarding the share of East Asia imports, Japan was the largest source which accounted for 35%. The shares of US and the EC were 20% and 13% respectively.³¹⁰ The rising intra-regional trade and investment flows in East Asia further inhabited the EU's already low percentage of East Asian trade and foreign investment from increasing. Between 1986 and 1994, intra-regional share of exports in East Asia grew from 29% to 49%, while that of imports increased from 42% to 56%.³¹¹ In the mid-1990s, the EU had finished its single market project. It had more energy and diplomatic resources available to look outward, and finally became aware of the missed opportunities in Asia. In order to prevent itself from being marginalised, the EU, led by Germany and prompted by the business community, began to revise its relations towards Asia, and moved Asia up the EU's priority list.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Michael Postert, "ASEM and EU-style Economic Integration in East Asia," in *Multiregionalism and Multilateralism: Asian-European Relations in a Global Context*, Bersick *et al* eds. (2006), 36.

³⁰⁹ Isogai Takashi and Shibamura Shunichi, "East Asia's Intra- and Inter-Regional Economic Relations; Data Analyses on Trade Direct Investments and Currency Transactions," Bank of Japan, International Department Working Paper Series 00 E-4 (2000): 8-9.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Athukorala Prema-chandra and Kohpaiboon Archanun, "Intra-Regional Trade in East Asia: The Decoupling Fallacy, Crisis, and Policy Change," Asia Development Bank Institute Working Paper, No.7 (2009): 6-8.

³¹² Islam, "Wake-up Call" (1994); Gaens, "ASEM's Background and Rationale" (2008), 9-28.

Third, the 1993 Maastricht Treaty introduced the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to the EU, equipping the Union to be an actor in international politics. Smith argued that this potential new role motivated the EU to engage with other regions, including East Asia.³¹³ The *Towards a New Asia Strategy* was published by the European Commission in July 1994, which introduced a more strategic view towards Asia.

By 1994, East Asia region as a whole had replaced Japan as one of the triadic economic engines in the world, as a result of the stagnation of the Japanese economy since the early 1990s, together with the rapid economic growth of the other East Asian economies. While the Single European Market was completed and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed, East Asia, Europe and North America became the three major global economies. The domination of these three regions in the world economy was generalised as ‘Triadisation’³¹⁴ or ‘Tripolarisation’³¹⁵, while the three regions were referred to as the ‘Triads’. The Triads dominated the realms of trade, investment, finance and technological innovations.³¹⁶ When they started interacting with other world regions,

³¹³ Michael Smith, “The European Union and Asia-Pacific,” in *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, Anthony McGrew and Brook Christopher eds. (London: Routledge, 1998), 289-315.

³¹⁴ Chen, “NATO, APEC and ASEM: Triadic Inter-regionalism and Global order” (2005): 361-78; Hänggi, “Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives” (2000): 10, 13.

³¹⁵ Dent., “The ASEM: Managing the New Framework of the EU’s Economic Relations with East Asia” (1997/8): 496-9.

³¹⁶ James R. Ferguson, “Shaping new relationships: Asia, Europe and the new trilateralism,” *International Politics* 34, no.4 (1997): 395-415; Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 56-80; Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella complex’ of EU-East Asia economic relations” (2001): 25-53.

inter-regionalism proliferated.³¹⁷

In the East Asia-Europe-North America triangle, the Eurasian link was much weaker than the trans-Atlantic or trans-Pacific ones. The former Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who was also the founding-father of ASEM, pointed out, the ‘trans-Atlantic alliance between the US and the EU is built on strong historical, cultural, political, economic and security links.’³¹⁸ For the trans-Pacific ties, APEC was created in 1989 to promote economic ties across Asia Pacific. In 1992, the Clinton Administration adopted a proactive approach towards East Asia and initiated the ambitious attempt to create a Pacific Free Trade Area amongst APEC’s eighteen members by 2020. Hence, the need to ‘fill the missing link’ or to ‘strengthen the weak leg’ of the triadic relations emerged.³¹⁹ A number of observers saw ASEM as a reaction of the EU to the upgrade of APEC in 1993 and to APEC’s rejection of its application for an observer status.³²⁰ Dent suggested, if ASEM did not exist, it would

³¹⁷ Rüländ, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 5; Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 1; Rüländ, “Interregionalism in International Relations” (2002): 2; Söderbaum and van Langenhove, “Introduction: The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism” (2006), 8-9; Song, “Regionalisation, inter-regional cooperation and global governance” (2007): 70; Doidge, “Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism” (2007): 220-48.

³¹⁸ Goh Chok Tong, “Asian Affairs on ASEM”, (speech given in 2000, <www.asian-affairs.com/ASEM/goh.html>, accessed on 1 September 2009).

³¹⁹ Maull and Tanaka, “The geopolitical dimension”, *The Rational and Common Agenda for Asia-Europe Cooperation* (1997): 36; Soesastro and Wanandi, “Towards an Asia-Europe partnership: A perspective from Asia” (1997): 24; H änggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 56, 61; Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 313; Yeo, “Ten Years of ASEM-Changes and Challenges” (2006), 141.

³²⁰ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM”, in *ASEM: How promising a partnership?* (1997): 18; Gilson, “Defining Inter-Regionalism: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (2002): 2; Pan, “A Chinese Perspective on ASEM’s Enlargement and Development” (2010), 45.

have had to be invented anyway as a response to triadisation.³²¹

When the Single European Market was officially completed in the end of 1992, there was a fear of an inward-looking ‘Fortress Europe’ in East Asia.³²² Indeed, many trade partners of the EC worried that their economic opportunities would be jeopardised. Moreover, thirteen Central and Eastern European countries applied to join the EU in the mid-1990s. This gave rise to potentially the biggest enlargement of the EU, in terms of number of new member states, population size and diversity. This further motivated economies in East Asia to foster their relations with the Union so as to sustain access to the European market as well as get access to new markets in Central and European Europe.

As regionalism of ASEAN furthered, negotiation on membership with Myanmar/Burma, whose human right situation has provoked criticism in the EU and in its member states, began. The accession of Myanmar/Burma to ASEAN, conflicting views on the East Timor issue, together with the failure in revising the EU-ASEAN 1980 Cooperation Agreement brought EU-ASEAN relations to stagnation. The two regional organisations had to look for ‘a way out’, and the creation of ASEM appeared to be a timely option.³²³

Additionally, Dent highlighted the post-colonial legacy as a further basis for the establishment of ASEM. He saw ASEM resting on a set of bilateral economic and

³²¹ Christopher M. Dent, “The EU-East Asia Relationship: The Persisting Weak Triadic Link?”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 4, no.3 (1999): 390.

³²² Dent, “The ASEM: Managing the New Framework of the EU’s Economic Relations with East Asia” (1997/8): 509.

³²³ Forster, “The European Union in South-East Asia: Continuity and Change in Turbulent Times” (1999): 751-2; Forster, “Evaluating the EU-ASEM relationship: a negotiated order approach” (2000): 795-6.

political relations that had been developed between the EU member states and the ‘ASEAN+3’ states, especially between the former colonially linked countries.³²⁴ Bilateral relations among individual ASEM partners are discussed in details in Chapter 7.

Noteworthy, the ASEAN countries, Singapore in particular, had a vision of having ASEAN in the driver seat in Asia-Europe relations. In October 1994, during an official visit to the French European Council Presidency, former Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong proposed to his French counterpart the idea of holding informal gatherings of the Heads of State/Government from Asia and Europe. Initially, the Europeans’ response was lukewarm.³²⁵ In March 1995, the ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting adopted a position paper to officially invite the EU to select the European participants for an inter-regional forum.³²⁶ This proposal was finally endorsed by the EU member states at the Council summit in June 1995 and it was decided that only the fifteen EU Member States at that time would be included. On the Asian side, ASEAN invited three of its Northeast Asian counterparts – China, Japan and South Korea – to join the inter-regional forum. Their first response was not enthusiastic either. Japan was concerned about the potential harm to its relations with the US.³²⁷ China worried about becoming a target of criticism for its human rights

³²⁴ Dent, “The ASEM: Managing the New Framework of the EU’s Economic Relations with East Asia” (1997/8): 502-3.

³²⁵ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM” (1997): 3.

³²⁶ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: the development and different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 24.

³²⁷ Gilson, “Japan’s Role in Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an Interregional or Intraregional Agenda?” (1999): 738; Yang, “The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia: ASEAN’s Policy Toward ASEM” (2001): 83; Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism” (2006): 7-8.

and political situations.³²⁸ Subsequently, ASEAN assiduously persuaded the ‘plus three countries’ to participate in ASEM. Finally, in December 1995, China, Japan and South Korea joined the ASEAN countries as the ‘ASEAN+3’ group to prepare the Asian concept paper which gathered the views of the ‘Asian side’ for the first ASEM Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOMs) in Madrid. After these endeavours of ASEAN and its member states, twenty-five countries from Asia and Europe, together with the European Commission, convened in Bangkok in March 1996 for the inaugural ASEM summit.

In sum, between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the mid-1990s, a number of significant developments affected the relations between the EU and East Asia: the completion of the Single European Market, the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, the creation of the CFSP, the new wave of regionalism in the world, the rise of triadisation, the Asian economic miracle and the stagnation of the EU-ASEAN inter-regional relationship. Subsequently, a quest for closer ties between the EU and East Asia developed. ASEM marked an effort of East Asia and the EU to get a foothold in each other’s markets.³²⁹

The establishment of the ASEM process offered a key turning point for the distant Asia-Europe relations. Pan described ASEM as the ‘new silk road’ to connect Asia

³²⁸ Gilson, “Japan’s Role in Asia-Europe Meeting: Establishing an Interregional or Intraregional Agenda?” (1999): 738.

³²⁹ Richards and Kirkpatrick “Reorienting Interregional Co-operation in the Global Political Economy: Europe’s East Asian Policy” (1999): 690; Rüländ, “ASEAN and the European Union: a Bumpy Interregional Relationship” (2001): 23; Rüländ, “The EU as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor: Lessons for Global Governance from Europe’s Relations with Asia” (2002): 2-3; Dent, “From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future challenges for ASEM” (2003): 227-9; Park, “ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations: Background, characteristics and challenges” (2004): 342.

and Europe.³³⁰ In the opening ceremony of the inaugural ASEM summit, the then Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa underscored that the ‘rediscovery’ between Asia and Europe would forge a meaningful partnership for the future.³³¹ The then President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, called ASEM ‘an historical turning point in our [EU-Asia] relations’.³³² Meetings between Heads of State/Government, the highest level, demonstrated the willingness of players in the two regions to engage with one another. The following section examines how such willingness was turned into reality.

4.3. Highs and lows in ASEM’s first 17 years

Over the past seventeen years, ASEM has experienced both highs and lows. The inaugural meeting was filled with euphoria and optimism. Pelkmans and Hiroko called it an ‘astonishing success’.³³³ The leaders forged a new comprehensive Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth which aimed at strengthening links between Asia and Europe, thereby contributing to peace, global stability and prosperity. The list of follow-up measures was regarded as impressive.³³⁴ The Chairman’s Statement concluded it as an ‘historic and momentous occasion.’³³⁵

³³⁰ Guang Pan, “Enhance Silk Road spirit for win-win Asia-Europe cooperation”, *People’s Daily English Online*, 24 October 2008, <english.people.com.cn/90001/90780/6521147.html#>; Voicu Ioan, “ASEM and the Management of Global Crisis,” *ABAC Journal*, 28, no.3 (2008): 3.

³³¹ “Asia and Europe Rediscover Each Other at ASEM”, *Jakarta Post*, 2 March 1996.

³³² Quoted in Richards and Kirkpatrick, “Reorienting Interregional Cooperation in the Global Political Economy: Europe’s East Asian Policy” (1999): 684.

³³³ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM” (1997): 4

³³⁴ *Ibid.*; “Asia and Europe: Friends apart”, *The Economist* 38, iss. 7956, p.33, 9 March 1996.

³³⁵ *Chairman’s Statement of the First ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting*, Singapore, 14-15 February 1997, paragraph 2.

However, just one year later, many East Asian economies were hit severely by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. ASEM2 in 1998 marked a reaffirmation of the partnership between Europe and Asia: Hänggi described it as a reassurance of the recognition of Asia as ‘an equal partner in the triadic relationship.’³³⁶ The Asian partners reported their financial situation to their European counterparts. The Europeans responded by offering a \$30 million Asian Trust Fund to be managed by the World Bank, sending a group of experts to Asia to give technical advice in reforming the financial sector, and reiterating the advantage of mirroring their own economic model. Yeo saw this as the ‘first test for ASEM which it passed with successful conduct’,³³⁷ whereas some other observers evaluated the EU’s response more negatively.³³⁸

ASEM3 welcomed the recovery of the Asian economies. At the new Millennium, a breakthrough was made that discussions were extended to certain sensitive issues – human rights and the situation in East Timor – despite some Asian partners, such as China, preferred to remain focused solely on trade, business and culture cooperation.³³⁹ Furthermore, discussion on membership expansion was opened. On the other hand, participants started showing ‘summit fatigue’, exhibiting boredom at

³³⁶ Hänggi, “ASEM and the Construction of the New Triad” (1999): 76.

³³⁷ For example, Yeo, *Asia and Europe: the development and different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 36.

³³⁸ Cammack and Richards, “ASEM and interregionalism” (1999): 3-7; Cammack, “Interpreting ASEM: Interregionalism and the new materialism” (1999): 29-30; Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 41; Paul Lim, “Whither Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)” (Paper prepared for the Roundtable *ASEM 2001: Progress or Stagnation?*, Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington DC, 4-7 April 2002): 1.

³³⁹ Shada Islam, “Cross Purpose”, *Far East Economic Review*, p.24, 20 July 2000.; John Burton, “Europe and Asia wooing North Korea”, *Financial Times*, p.8, 21 October 2000.

counterparts who read out pre-written long speeches during the summits.³⁴⁰ The eleven-page Chairman's Statement, with forty-five paragraphs and two extra pages of annex, was much longer than those of the previous two summits. This lengthiness matched criticism that ASEM3 was over-prepared and over-bureaucratised. Such over-preparation and over-bureaucratisation were blamed for jeopardising the informal and interactive nature of the summit.³⁴¹ In addition, a so-called 'Christmas tree syndrome' emerged, in which ASEM partners competed with each other to put up new initiatives and offer to host ASEM-related events in their own soil. In response, the two immediate Foreign Ministers' Meetings (FMM III and FMM IV) and their Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM Lanzarote in April 2002 and SOM Madrid in June 2002) devoted time to draft guidelines to ensure better interaction and informality of the summits.³⁴² Subsequently, ASEM4 introduced a retreat session for the leaders to conduct candid dialogue behind closed door. The Chairman's Statement was greatly reduced to just five pages.

Taking place a year after the September 11 tragedy, the threat of terrorism unsurprisingly dominated the agenda of ASEM4. The first ever ASEM summit retreat session was devoted to the prevention of future cross-cultural conflicts under the title 'Dialogue on Cultures and Civilisations'. This close-door session and the informal

³⁴⁰ Interview with former European Commissioner of External Relations, Christopher Patten, on 28 October 2009, during his visit to the National Centre of Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, New Zealand; European Commission, *Vademecum: Modalities for Future ASEM Dialogue Taking the Process Forward* (2001): 2.

³⁴¹ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: the development and different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 79, 88; European Commission, *Vademecum: Modalities for Future ASEM Dialogue Taking the Process Forward* (2001).

³⁴² *Chairman's Statement of the fourth Foreign Ministers' Meetings*, Madrid, 6-7 June 2002, Annex-ASEM Working Method.

dinner before the summit were expected to facilitate candid interactions among the leaders, and hence to enhance the informality of the process.³⁴³

The heavy concentration on counter-terrorism led to a significant reduction in attention to the economic and social-cultural pillars, demonstrating ASEM's weakness in balancing its three pillars. Still, ASEM partners did not entirely forget the significance of their economic relations: the summiters decided to create an action-oriented economic taskforce to draw recommendations on fostering the inter-regional economic partnership. It was the summiters' first demand for 'concrete' action. The summiters also identified priority areas for more 'concrete' cooperation. Apart from lack of tangible results, ASEM partners were also concerned about the growing absentee rate. Nine EU countries (out of the fifteen) were represented by civil servants (who held non-ministerial positions) in ASEM4. This disregard of ASEM irritated the Asian partners, who always sent their Heads of State/Government to ASEM summits.³⁴⁴

Between ASEM4 and ASEM5, the process faced further hindrances when many EU member states opposed to the accession of Myanmar to ASEM, sparked by the junta's poor human rights record.³⁴⁵ Owing to this contingency, two ASEM ministerial meetings were cancelled in 2004 and the sixth Economic Ministers' Meeting was

³⁴³ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: the development and different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 53.

³⁴⁴ César de Prado Yepes, "The effect of ASEM on European foreign policies," *Asia Europe Journal* 3 (2005): 25; Teija Tiilikainen, "ASEM in the Context of the European Union's External Relations", in *Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations*, Gaens ed. (2008), 146.

³⁴⁵ Pereira, "The fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit. An assessment" (2005): 17-23; Silja Keva, "Human Rights and Burma/Myanmar in the ASEM Dialogue", in *Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations*, Gaens ed. (2008), 79; Silja Keva and Bart Gaens, "ASEM's Institutional Infrastructure", in *Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations* Gaens ed. (2008), 130.

downgraded to a high-level officials' meeting in 2005 (see Table 6.4 of Chapter 6).³⁴⁶

The tense situation led to concern about whether the Hanoi summit could take place as scheduled.³⁴⁷ Finally, after agreeing that Myanmar would only be represented by below the head-of-state-level (i.e. the summit would be attended by minister instead of the head of state of Myanmar), ASEM partners attended the summit as scheduled.

Unlike the previous summits, no landmark issue occupied the agenda of ASEM5. Inherited from ASEM4, three retreat sessions were organised in ASEM5. One session was devoted to each of ASEM's three pillars. Besides, the leaders spent some time discussing the institutional mechanism of the process, stressing the importance of ASEM's open, evolutionary and informal nature. Yet, no consensus was reached on whether to establish an ASEM Secretariat. Also inherited from ASEM4, ASEM5 summiteers demanded more concrete actions and tangible results. Importantly, ASEM5 marked a significant step forward – ASEM's first and largest (thus far) round of enlargement, to embrace the ten new Central and Eastern European countries who joined the EU in 2004 and the three new ASEAN member states (Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar).

On ASEM's tenth anniversary, the sixth summit was given an ambitious theme: 10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges-Joint Responses. The summit was conducted in a conflict-free atmosphere. New to the summit organisation (the previous summits each

³⁴⁶ The ASEM EU partners refused to take part in the 2004 Financial Ministers' Meeting or Economic Ministers' Meeting due to the persistent disagreement of ASEM membership for the EU and ASEAN new member states. The EU side argued that because of the common external policy, no EU member states should be left out in an inter-regional forum like ASEM. Thus, no EU side ministers could go to the 2004 Financial Ministers' Meeting or Economic Ministers' Meeting. In 2005, the EMM6 was rescheduled to September 2005. However, the Netherlands immigration authority rejected the visa application for the delegates from Myanmar which caused dissatisfaction among other ASEAN members who boycotted the 2005 EMM6 eventually.

³⁴⁷ "EU cancels talks with Asia in Myanmar row", *Asian Tribune*, 14 June 2004.

consisted of three sessions, one devoted to one of the three pillars), a separate session was dedicated to sustainable development, environment and energy security. As environmental protection and climate change were given unprecedented attention, the summit produced the Declaration on Climate Change. Since then, environment and energy issues have grown in importance in ASEM. In addition, some time was spent discussing administrative issues, namely how to adjust the working methods to fit the bigger membership, whether a physical secretariat was necessary as well as further enlargement. ASEM6 concluded with reflection and celebration of ASEM's first decade.

ASEM7 welcomed India, Mongolia, Pakistan, the ASEAN Secretariat, Bulgaria and Romania (ASEM's second round of enlargement). Notably, it was the first large-scale gathering of world leaders after the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers in September 2008, which marked the outbreak of the 2008/09 global financial crisis. ASEM7 was expected to come up with rescue plans for the global economy. Much of the attention was given to the crisis and its related matters such as debt relief and sustainability for the least developed countries, the need for additional development finance and the fluctuation of commodity prices. The content of the Chairman's Statement clearly reflected the domination of economic issues in ASEM7. The length of the 'Advancing Economic Cooperation' section was much longer than that devoted to other fields. Moreover, the leaders issued the Statement on the International Financial Situation. While facing pressure to address the global financial crisis, ASEM leaders still devoted time to exchange views on political issues, sustainable development and ASEM administration (including further enlargement). Subsequently, the Beijing

Declaration on Sustainable Development was endorsed, and the Issue-based Leadership mechanism was adopted.³⁴⁸

Two years passed, ASEM8's agenda remained dominated by the global economic downturn. The leaders discussed global economic and financial governance reform, in particular, the Asian partners demanded for heavier representation and weight in global governance. The summit was, to a certain extent, a preparation for the G20 in Seoul in November 2010. The China currency controversy was another central issue with the European partners urged for a faster appreciation of the renminbi. Political and environmental issues were also covered, but were given less attention. ASEM summiteers urged the Myanmar government to release political prisoners as well as to ensure free and fair elections. They also urged for a resumption of the long-stalled Six-Party talks on nuclear development and security in the Korean Peninsula, as well as reiterated their commitment to promote sustainable development.

In addition, ASEM8 signified a new page for ASEM whose membership was extended to Australia, New Zealand and Russia, three countries whose regional identities remained controversial. The accession of these three members has reignited the question about how to define 'Asia' and 'Europe'. While the EU side insisted on keeping the European membership of ASEM solely for its member states, some Asian partners were not convinced that Australia, New Zealand or Russia belonged to Asia. The temporary solution was the creation of a 'temporary third category' to shelter them.

³⁴⁸ Countries can take the lead in sectors and issues in which they have a particular interest and expertise, with the help of co-sponsoring countries. Each of the issue/sector leader team should consist of country from both regions so as to maintain the balance of participation and inter-regional nature of ASEM.

In November 2012, ASEM9 took place in Vientiane. It was the largest and highest-level international event which Laos has even hosted. Laos was the first non-founding member of ASEM to host a summit, marking a step forwards by the newer members to assume active roles in the process. In addition, ASEM9 officially accepted Australia, New Zealand and Russia as full Asian members. (The SOM in March 2012 decided to dissolve the ‘temporary third category’ and merge the three countries into the Asia side.) The forth enlargement welcomed Bangladesh to the Asian side, as well as Norway and Switzerland to the European side. Remarkably, it was the first time that the EU side loosened its tight restriction on ASEM European membership to accept non-EU member states. The impact of adding all these countries to the process, especially the impact on the concepts of ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ awaits future research.

Despite the theme ‘Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity’ tried to balance between the political and economic partnership, ASEM9’s agenda was again topped by economic and financial issues as a result of the lingering eurozone debt crisis.³⁴⁹ Territorial disputes between China and Japan, China and several ASEAN countries; as well as Japan and South Korea were expected to overshadow other topics. Lao as the summit chair, by emphasising that ASEM ought to focus on topics which concerned both Asia and Europe, largely prevented those bilateral conflicts from appearing in ASEM9 discussion table.³⁵⁰ Noteworthy, one-third of ASEM partners

³⁴⁹ Teddy Ng, “Premier Wen Jiabao calls for clear euro-zone plan”, *South China Morning Post*, 6 November 2012; Leslie Koh, “No EU member wants to break up grouping: PM Lee”, *The Straits Times*, 7 November 2012; “Asem presses for economic integration”, *Bangkok Post*, 7 November 2012.

³⁵⁰ Leslie Koh, “No EU member wants to break up grouping: PM Lee”, *The Straits Times*, 7 November 2012.

did not send their Heads of State/Government to the Vientiane summit.³⁵¹ Among the absentees found German Chancellor, UK Prime Minister and Indian Prime Minister. The growing absence rate, together with the enlarged memberships, decreasing volume in Asia-European trade and investment as well as the weak tie in security field are a few immediate challenges for today's ASEM process.

4.4. Conclusion

The above overview of the contemporary history between Asia and Europe covered how countries from Asia and Europe shifted from rulers-colonies to donors-recipients to equal-partners under the ASEM framework. As emphasised by the European External Service Action (EEAS) in a recent publication, the Asia-Pacific is now central to the EU's growth prospect.³⁵² In 2011, ASEM Asian partners provided more than a third of the EU's total import and received around two-fifth of the EU's total exports.³⁵³ Asia has become the EU's biggest external trading partner, in which China's share has been the largest as a single nation. On the other hand, the EU has been among the top trading partners of each of ASEM Asian country.³⁵⁴ Moreover, the EEAS marked that 'the EU cannot expect to address seriously any of the major global challenges – from climate change to terrorism – without strong cooperation with its Asian partners.'

³⁵¹ Source: Official website of Lao's Press Department, http://www.mofapresscenter.gov.la/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39%3Alist-of-confirmed-asem-leaders&catid=4%3Anews&Itemid=15&lang=en (accessed on 7 November 2012).

³⁵² EEAS, "EU-Asia Factsheet", http://eeas.europa.eu/asia/docs/eu_in_asia_factsheet_en.pdf (accessed on 25 September 2012).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall to the mid-1990s, there were several significant developments which built momentum for the establishment of ASEM. The completion of the Single European Market, the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, the creation of EU's CFSP, the new wave of regionalism, triadisation, the Asian economic miracle and the stagnation of the EU-ASEAN inter-regional relationship all contributed to the quest for closer ties between the EU and East Asia. The creation of ASEM marked a key turning point in the relations between Asia and Europe. Since 1996, ASEM has experienced peaks and troughs. Still, the successive rounds of enlargement and regularity of the summits indicate the continuous support of the process from the partners. To further understand how the ASEM process contributes to the quality of the century-old Asia-Europe relations, the following three chapters explore the four tracks of the ASEM process (Track 1, Track 1.1, Track 2 and Track 3) in details.

Chapter Five

ASEM's institutional design: a state-centric hierarchy

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, content analysis is used to examine the institutional design laid down by the founding members of ASEM. This includes the key guiding principles governing the new cooperative framework, the kind of actors concerned and empowered by the agreed rules, and the functions designated to the process by its founders. The tools assigned for the process to fulfil such functions are explored as well.

The rules governing ASEM were agreed by the founding partners' Heads of State/Government, and written down by their foreign ministers and senior officials. They were all national governmental actors, except the European Commission. Noteworthy, all ASEM official documents have to pass each ASEM partner's examination, often word for word.³⁵⁵ Therefore, the final rules presumably reflect the lowest common denominator in views and expectations of the founders of ASEM.

A full picture of ASEM's institutional design is provided in the following documents: the ASEM's handbook, *Asia Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (AECF 2000)*; its supplement *Recommendations for ASEM Working Methods* annexed to the Chairman's Statement of ASEM5 and the *Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM*. In addition, the official website of the ASEM process, *ASEM Inforboard*, provides more

³⁵⁵ See footnote no.234 in Chapter 3.

information. The official documents published after each ASEM summit (the Chairmen's Statements as well as the declarations/statements on special topics) also inform how ASEM functions. This chapter comprises a close reading of these sources of information in order to understand the blueprint laid down by ASEM's founders to set the process to work.

5.2. The guiding principles

ASEM partners agreed on six key principles as fundamental to the design of the newly created framework – equal partnership, open and evolutionary, enhancement of mutual understanding and awareness, multi-dimensionality, informality and dual-tracks system.³⁵⁶ These six principles are repeatedly affirmed in various official documents. Noteworthy, informality and equal partnership are perceived as an adoption of the 'Asia-way' or the 'ASEAN-way' (which emphasises non-intervention in other states' internal affairs and the basis of consensus). On the other hand, the inclusion of the political pillar (which makes ASEM more multi-sectoral) is seen as a concession by the Asians (except Japan), who prefer to focus on economic cooperation.³⁵⁷

By *equal partnership*, ASEM partners mean to distinguish the new relation from some existing bilateral ones, such as the EU-ASEAN relation, in which the EU side has

³⁵⁶ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 8; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM1*, 1996, paragraph 4, 5, 18; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM2*, 1998, paragraph 3; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM3*, 2000, paragraph 8; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 27; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM5*, 2004, paragraph 5.2; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM7*, 2008, paragraph 4; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 4.

³⁵⁷ Godement and Pierre, "After the ASEM meeting: Goals and means" (1997), 56; Pelkmans and Hiroko, 'The Promise of ASEM' (1997), 10; Steiner, "Europe Meets Asia: 'Old' vs. 'New' Inter-Regional Cooperation and ASEM's Prospects" (2000): 17-18; Lay Hwee Yeo, 'The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): From Selective Engagement To Comprehensive Partnership' (*Sudostasien aktuell Special issue*, Humburg: Institute for Asian Studies, 2002), 2, 7; Lim, "Whither Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (2002): 1; Shada Islam, 'Partner in Profits; EU seeks to forge strong ties with Asia at summit', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 February 1996.

always played the ex-colonial master role or aid-donor role.³⁵⁸ Apart from bringing the Asian side and European side into a balance position, ASEM is also designed as a platform where every participant has equal weight and equal say. On equal footing, the two sides emphasise their commitment to conduct discussion with mutual respect and mutual benefit. However, some observers criticise that this principle is not reflected in the reality. Robles stated that the EU side has been stronger and controlling the ASEM agenda, owing to its more advanced economic development.³⁵⁹ Gilson shared Robles' view and added the disparate colonial legacies as another reason of the superiority of the EU side.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, she pointed out that the EU has represented a unified front for the European side while no similar regional regime existed among the ASEM Asian partners. Yet, such perceptions seemed deteriorating since ASEM7, when many Eurozone economies entered into financial crises. As the Asia Editor of *the Financial Times* commented, 'the financial crisis has helped to even the relationship between Asia and the US on the one hand and Asia and Europe on the other.'³⁶¹

Openness refers to ASEM's membership. It is expected that more and more countries in Asia and Europe will join the process. Yet, a few pre-conditions are stressed – 'enlargement should be conducted on the basis of consensus by the Heads of State/Government';³⁶² 'enlargement should be conducted in a progressive stages';³⁶³

³⁵⁸ Gaens, "ASEM's Background and Rationale" (2008), 17.

³⁵⁹ Robles, *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (2008), 38-92.

³⁶⁰ Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 165, 175.

³⁶¹ David Pilling, Asia Editor of *the Financial Times* was interviewed by *Bangkok Post*, "Will Multiple Currencies Help?", *Bangkok Post*, 11 October 2012.

³⁶² *AECE 1998*, 1998, paragraph 12; *AECE 2000*, 2000, paragraph 8 and paragraph 28.

³⁶³ *AECE 2000*, 2000, paragraph 28.

and the two-key approach has to be followed. The two-key approach refers to ‘a final decision on new participants will be made by consensus among all partners only after a candidate has first got the support of its partners within its region’.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, there is no observer status created in ASEM thus far; all participants have to be full members.

Until ASEM9, ASEM has undergone four rounds of enlargement (in 2004, 2008, 2010 and 2012 respectively), expanding ASEM’s membership from twenty-six to fifty-one. Up till ASEM8, the membership of the European side has been strictly limited to the members of the EU. Russia’s application to join ASEM from the European side was rejected. Norway also expressed its interest to join the process when ASEM first established, but was not welcomed by the European side either. This unwritten rule about ASEM’s European membership is actually in contradiction with the ‘openness’. It also creates doubt about the representativeness of the EU for the whole Europe. Notably, the admission of Norway and Switzerland to the process in ASEM9 as full ASEM European members marked a breakthrough, giving ASEM a more solid ground to claim to be ‘open to all’ in Asia and Europe.

Evolutionary means that ASEM will adapt its working mechanism and agenda when necessary. The first list of changes on working methods was proposed and adopted in ASEM5 (October 2004). The list of change focused chiefly on improving the coordination (especially on the Asian side), efficiency and ability to deliver tangible results of the ASEM process. The role of the SOMs was strengthened; the role of the regional coordinators was clarified; and an ASEM logo was endorsed. The second round of proposed changes came in ASEM 6 (September 2006), in the *Helsinki*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Declaration on the Future of ASEM. It introduced the Issue-based Leadership, established the ASEM Virtual Secretariat and strengthened the role of the hosts of the next summit and Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM). Moreover, FMM10 (June 2011) agreed to establish an ASEM Chairman Support Group to improve ASEM's effectiveness, continuity and visibility.

Recognising the presence of misperception and stereotyping between the two regions, *enhancement of mutual understanding and awareness* has been a key objective of ASEM since inception. Facilitating continuous dialogue between the governments and increasing people-to-people contacts are identified as main tools, which are expected to cumulatively contribute to a better understanding between Asia and Europe. Thus far, no evaluation of the achievement of ASEM in this aspect is available, mainly due to the difficulties in gauging abstract ideas like 'understanding' and 'perception'. In Chapter 8, this research attempts to assess ASEM's achievement in this aspect with the aid of empirical data.

Multi-dimensionality refers to ASEM's three-pillar structure which comprises fostering political dialogue, reinforcing economic cooperation and promoting cooperation in other areas (science and technology cross-flows; environment; development co-operation; and cultural and educational exchanges). Some observers highlighted that the inclusion of the political dialogue was promoted by the European side while the Asians mainly saw ASEM in economic terms.³⁶⁵ The inclusion of non-economic aspects distinguishes ASEM from its close cousin APEC, which concentrates purely on economic cooperation. ASEM also differs from the ARF, which focuses solely on security.

³⁶⁵ See footnote no. 357 earlier in this chapter.

Informality refers to the non-legal binding nature of the agreements and declarations produced under the ASEM framework (informality is also used in APEC and ASEAN). It is expected to encourage frank and truly interactive exchange of views between the partners. Similarly, *informality* is supposed to promote the development of personal contacts and mutual trust between the leaders who attend the meetings. As mentioned above, this format is seen as an Asian input.³⁶⁶ The implementation of any agreement and the organisation of related activities depend on the partners' voluntary input. It is believed that the 'peer influence', or which Lim called 'Gentleman's agreements',³⁶⁷ will make ASEM partners implement the agreed policies.

Informality also means that no comprehensive set of rules exist to govern the interaction. An informal atmosphere is specially created during the summits and ministerial meetings by requesting participants not to read out pre-written speech, keeping the meeting-room doors closed (especially to the media), and allowing the participants to sit comfortably on armchairs in a circle. Besides, the agenda and activities of ASEM are flexible, therefore, highly reactive to new developments in the international realm.

In addition, institution-building and staffing are minimised. The idea of having a physical secretariat has been rejected a few times by the ASEM leaders. The sole exception is the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), which was initiated by and physically sits in Singapore. ASEF is mandated to oversee ASEM's social-cultural

³⁶⁶ Pelkmans and Hiroko, "The Promise of ASEM" (1997): 12; Paul Lim, "The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process1: Issues for ASEM III," in *The European Union and East Asia: inter-regional linkages in a changing global system*, Peter Wallace Preston and Julie Gilson eds. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001), 4.

³⁶⁷ Lim, "The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process1: Issues for ASEM III" (2001), 4.

pillar. Noteworthy, some observers thought that the *informality* has caused problems for ASEM in terms of coordination and communication, especially when the membership gets bigger and bigger.³⁶⁸ Some also doubted the feasibility of ASEM to be truly informal, especially when some of the Heads of State/Government or ministers prefer to read out prepared speech during meetings.³⁶⁹

Last but not least, ASEM partners adopt a *dual-tracks system* in which interactions among governments become the first track (Track 1 in this dissertation) and interactions among private actors become the second track (Track 2 in this dissertation). This division depends on the actors involved. The private actors involved in Track 2 is made up mainly of academia, business community and other sectors from the civil society. Through Track 2, ASEM is expected to go beyond conventional government-to-government diplomacy and add another channel in Asia-Europe relations.

ASEM partners sometimes find it difficult to conform to these principles. It has indeed failed to live up to some of the principles in the opinion of some observers. It is not the objective of this dissertation to assess the degree of which ASEM partners have complied with these principles. This dissertation treats these principles as norms set by the ASEM partners. The more important question for this dissertation is how these principles influence the *actorness* of the related actors in the ASEM process. *Equal partnership, openness and evolutionary* concern only the actors on Track 1, while *multi-dimensionality* and *informality* have no direct relation *actorness*. In contrast, the

³⁶⁸ Loewen, "ASEM's Enlargement—state-to-state or region-to-region dialogue?" (2010), 36.

³⁶⁹ Information provide by former European Commission for Foreign Relations Lord Chris Pattern in a brief interview with author on 28 October 2009, during his visit to the National Centre for Research on Europe.

dual-track approach and objective to *foster mutual understanding and awareness of people* involve the non-state actors in Asia-Europe relations directly, especially the general public. Whether these principles can eventually lead to an increase in *actorness* of the non-state actors is examined in the next three chapters.

Apart from the six aforementioned key principles, the idea of ‘inter-regional’ also appears in ASEM official documents from time to time. Yet, the inter-regional nature of ASEM has been controversial. From the EU side, a region-to-region format is favoured, whereas the Asian states are more used to traditional bilateral relations and to act on their own behalf.³⁷⁰ Loewen argues that the Europeans prefer a region-to-region approach because their interests can be better articulated.³⁷¹ He attributes the Asians’ dubiousness towards the region-to-region format as a result of the ‘lack of clear regional representation’ and ‘the negative experience with the accession of Myanmar to ASEM’.³⁷² Yeo suggested that the rounds of enlargement have led to a loss of clarity of ASEM as an inter-regional dialogue.³⁷³

Despite this lack of consensus, ASEM’s official documents frequently called the process inter-regional. For instance, the precedent version of *AECF2000*, *AECF1998*, stated ‘ASEM could anchor inter-regional economic growth by promoting economic interaction between the business sectors...’³⁷⁴ The Chairman’s Statement of ASEM4

³⁷⁰ Information given by an authority source from the EU side which chose to stay anonymous, interviewed conducted by author on 20 July 2011. Former European Commission for Foreign Relations Lord Chris Pattern also said the same in a brief interview on 28 October 2009.

³⁷¹ Loewen, “ASEM’s Enlargement—state-to-state or region-to-region dialogue?” (2010), 35.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ Lay Hwee Yeo, “Summary of Roundtable Discussions”, in *The Asia-Europe Meeting, Engagement, Enlargement and Expectations*, Yeo and Hofmeister eds. (2010), 109.

³⁷⁴ *ACEF1998*, 1998, paragraph 14.

remarked ‘leaders emphasised that the already existing constructive bi-regional discourse in ASEM should serve to promote unity in diversity.’³⁷⁵ The Chairman’s Statement of ASEM5 noted ‘the Leaders agreed on the need to reinforce multilateral dialogue and cooperation in ASEM as well as within regional and inter-regional frameworks...’³⁷⁶ ASEM7’s Chairman’s Statement urged ASEM governments to ‘actively facilitate interfaith and intercultural dialogues, particularly at the regional and interregional levels, which is part of a much broader dialogue between Asia and Europe.’³⁷⁷

In the official discourses, ASEM is also portrayed as an interaction between Asia on one side and Europe on the other. In the Chairman’s Statement of ASEM1, twenty-one such descriptions can be found. For example, paragraph 5 underlined ASEM’s objective to strengthen political dialogue between Asia and Europe; paragraph 9 highlighted the potential for economic synergy between Asia and Europe; paragraph 15 underscored the importance to intensify the science and technology cross-flows between Asia and Europe. In the Chairman’s Statement of ASEM8, paragraph 4 noted that ASEM ‘established common ground between Asia and Europe on topical issues of mutual interest to both regions’; paragraph 5 stated that ASEM ‘established common ground between Asia and Europe on topical issues of mutual interest of both regions. These discourses reflect a habit for the ASEM partners to perceive the framework as an inter-regional interaction between ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’.

³⁷⁵ *Chairman Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 7.

³⁷⁶ *Chairman Statement of ASEM5*, 2004, paragraph 1.5.

³⁷⁷ *Chairman Statement of ASEM7*, 2008, paragraph 36.

Noteworthy, the renewed version of the *ASEM Infoboard* in mid-2012, for the first time, introduces ASEM as ‘trans-regional’. On the front page of the updated website found ‘ASEM is an informal trans-regional platform for dialogue and cooperation between the two regions...’³⁷⁸ Whether the ASEM partners have changed their conceptual understanding of ASEM from inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism is explored in later chapters. For ASEM to be a truly region-to-region interaction, the *actorness* of ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ in the process has to be high, which does not seem to be the case in reality. How compatible ASEM’s approach is to inter-regionalism is examined in the following chapters. The rest of this chapter explores in details the actors and actions assigned to them in ASEM’s institutional design.

5.3. Actors in ASEM’s design

An analysis of the ASEM key documents (*AECF2000, Recommendations for Organisational and Management Strategy* and the *Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM*) shows that a wide variety of actors are given a role in the ASEM process. The documents cover actors at different levels: international, inter/trans-regional, regional, national and domestic. Both state and non-state actors are mentioned. Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 show that some thirty different entities are mentioned as actors in the analysed documents.

³⁷⁸ *ASEM Infoboard, Home*, <www.ASEM-Infoboard.org> (accessed 22 May 2012).

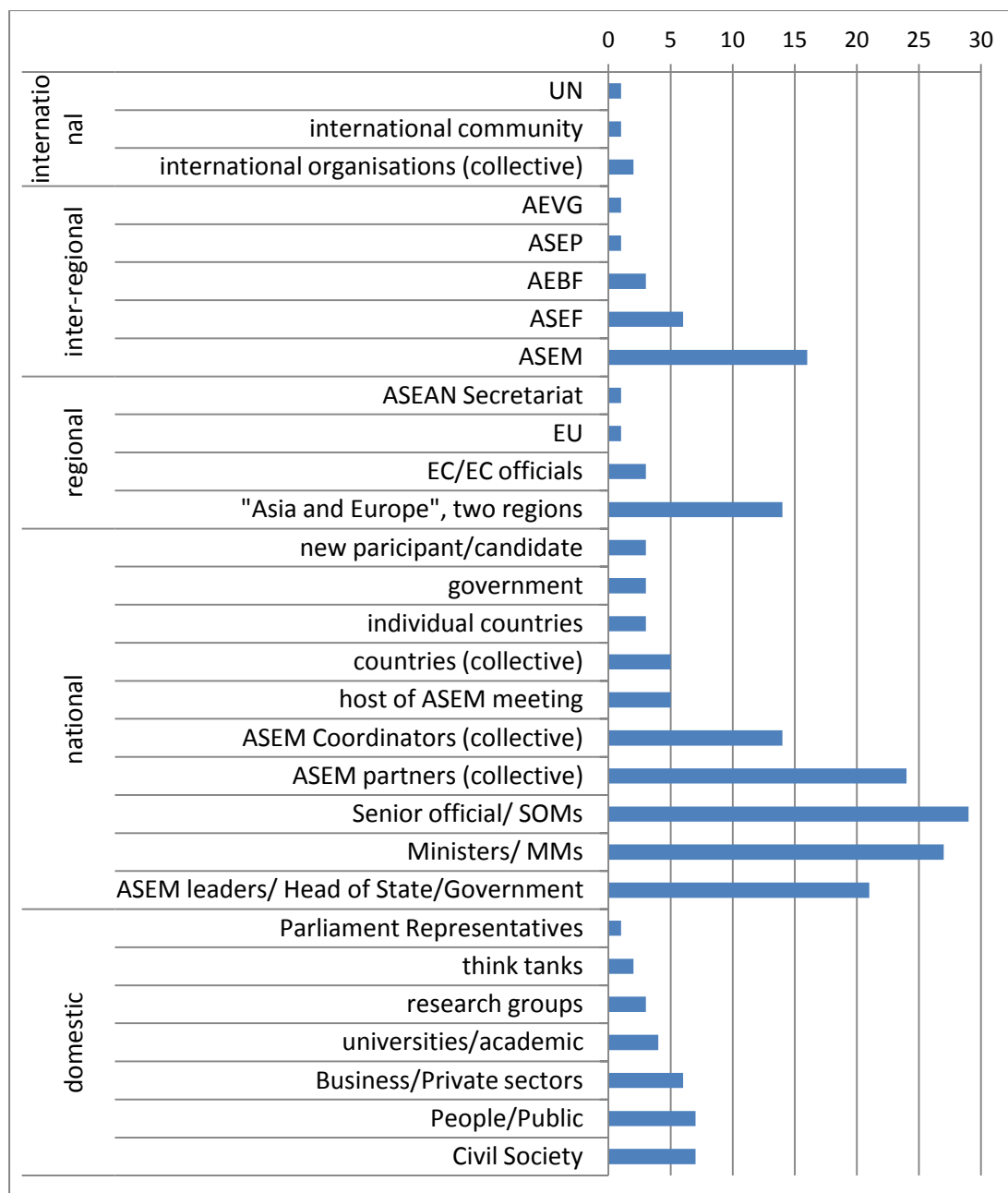


Figure 5.1: No. of time the following actors appeared in ASEM-institution design documents. (Total number = 214)

Importantly, the significance of the mentioned actors varies greatly. As displayed in Figure 5.1, ‘ASEM leaders/ Head of State/Government’, ‘ASEM partners’, ‘ministers’ and ‘senior officials’ appear the most frequently. Other actors appear much less frequent than these governmental representatives. For a deeper analysis, the following sections compare the significance of different actors who are named in the analysed ASEM official documents.

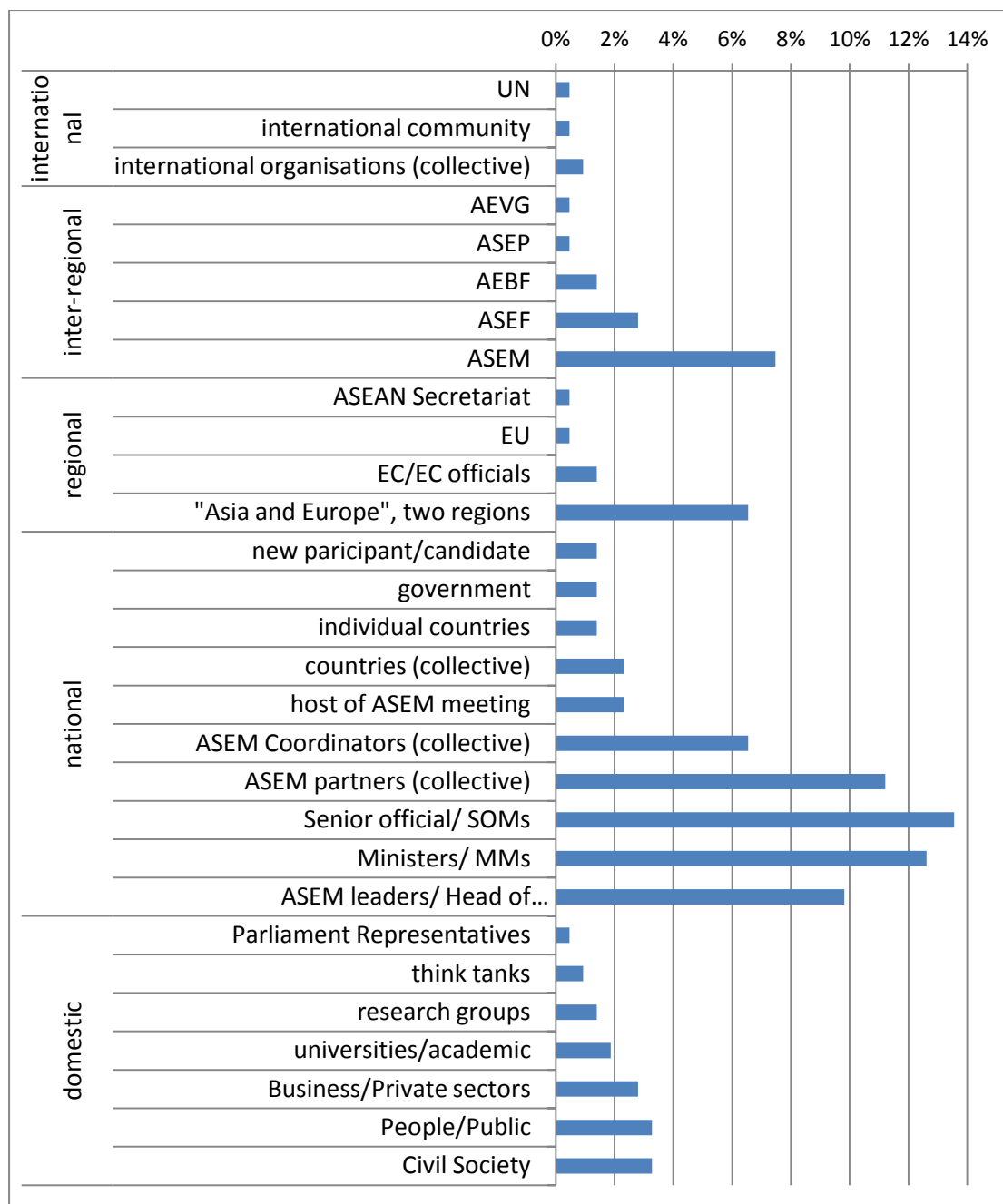


Figure 5.2: Appearance of an actor mentioned in ASEM-institution design documents in percentage. (Total number = 214)

5.3.1. Nation-states Until the ninth summit, the ASEM process embraced fifty-one partners, forty-nine nation-states and two communal institutions of existing regional organisations: the EU's European Commission and the Secretariat of ASEAN. Nation-states make up the majority of ASEM members. Moreover, the enlargement process thus far recruited only nation-states as ASEM new members rather than

considering more regional or international organisation. The only exception was the admission of the ASEAN Secretariat in the second round of enlargement; new members have all been nation-states.

In ASEM's key documents, nation-states occupy both space and crucial roles in the process. The *AECF2000* states that ASEM partners (among which a majority is nation-states) set the goals and agenda of the process, propose activities and adapt new initiatives.³⁷⁹ The partners also set the guidance and priorities of *AECF*.³⁸⁰ ASEM partner governments decide who to include and exclude in the process. Ministers and senior officials from various policy sectors convene upon the call of the Heads of State/Government.³⁸¹ Moreover, all ASEM key documents have to be approved and adopted by the Heads of State/Government in consensus. Most of the ASEM initiatives are endorsed by the Heads of State/Government, while the ministers and senior officials also share such power.³⁸² Paragraph 8 of *AECF2000* states that ASEM's 'enlargement should be conducted on the basis of consensus by the Heads of State/Government'. The current ASEM members determine who to accept. By and large, the partner governments, which are represented by officials from various levels, control how the ASEM process progresses and develops.

Concerning the executive part, ministers and their senior officials from ASEM partner governments (commissioners and their officials in the case of the European

³⁷⁹ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 5, 13, 25.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, paragraph 20; *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part I, point 1.

³⁸¹ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 21.

³⁸² The SOM was granted this power in ASEM5, see *Recommendations for ASEM Working Methods*, annexed to *Chairman's Statement of ASEM5*, 2004, points 2, 5.

Commission) take most of the real actions. All follow-up works are mandated to the governments of ASEM partners except in the social-cultural pillar which is delegated to ASEF. Due to the absence of a physical Secretariat, the day-to-day administration (including the preparation of the biennial summits and ministerial meetings) is mandated to the Foreign Affairs Ministry of each ASEM partner and the four regional coordinators.³⁸³ Each of the Foreign Affairs Ministry has at least one contact person to deal with ASEM-related work, namely circulation and sharing of ASEM-related information, communication with other ASEM partners concerning ASEM issues, preparation of ASEM official meetings, organisation of other ASEM activities, promotion of the awareness of ASEM and advancement of mutual understanding between Asia and Europe.

Furthermore, the senior officials from various sectors are directly responsible for the ASEM initiatives related to their relevant policy fields. The SOMs are mandated to filter the proposal of new initiatives (submitted by ASEM members) as well as to review the progress of the endorsed initiatives (implemented by the volunteered ASEM members).³⁸⁴ They are also responsible for the overall coordination of ASEM activities. The Senior Official Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI), for instance, ‘functions as an ASEM cornerstone and a well established coordinating mechanism’ in the economic pillar.³⁸⁵ The senior officials are indeed the actual executors of the ASEM process. Therefore, it is not surprising to see them mentioned again and again in the documents which lay down how the process ought to be run

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 22; *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part II, point 1.

³⁸⁴ *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part I, point 2.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, part II, point 1.

(they represent 14% of the appearance of actors in the ASEM instructional design documents, see Figure 5.2). In addition, special eminent persons groups or taskforces are sometimes created to work on specific issues; they are always set to report to the senior official instead of to the Heads of State/Government directly. All things considered, ASEM's working mechanism relies very much on the contribution of the partner governments, especially the senior officials.

To facilitate the overseeing of ASEM's everyday work, particularly in the years without any summit, the coordinator system was introduced. The functions and selection method of the ASEM Coordinators are first stated in *AECF2000* (mentioned three times), then further specified in the *Recommendations for ASEM Working Methods* (one part of the five-part document) and in *the Helsinki Declaration* (mentioned eight times). Since the coordinator system was first established, the number and appointment method of the coordinators have not changed even though ASEM has enlarged several times.

On the European side, the European Commission serves as a permanent coordinator. The EU member state holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU acts as the other coordinator. Consequently, the Commission has acted as the permanent memory of the ASEM process. In fact, it is not only for the European side, but the sole permanent memory for the whole process, as there is no permanent coordinator on the Asian side. However, neither the Commission nor the Presidency of the Council of the EU has replaced the EU member states in the ASEM meetings. The individual member states send their national delegations to ASEM discussions, speak and act for themselves.

After the Lisbon Treaty came in to effect, the rotating Presidency ought to be gradually replaced by the President of the Council of the EU and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in handling external relations. During ASEM8, the Commission, Belgian government (which was the host of the ASEM8 as it held the EU rotating Presidency between July and December 2010) together with the newly appointed Council President, Herman van Rompuy, all acted as coordinators of the EU side. For the first time in ASEM history, it was a full-time President of the Council of the EU who chaired the ASEM summit, despite the opposition of some Asian member states who perceived such action as a moving ASEM towards a region-to-region basis.³⁸⁶

In the ninth summit, van Rompuy and Barroso, the President of the European Commission, presented alongside the Head of State/Government of the individual EU member states. Noteworthy, the full-time President of the Council has not become another permanent coordinator. Instead, Cyprus which hosted the rotating Council Presidency in the second half of 2012 served as the European coordinator alongside the Commission. At present, the EEAS has taken over the Commission's permanent coordinator role of ASEM for the European side. Apart from the post-Lisbon evolution of EU's external relations representation, there is another problem to the selection of European coordinators after ASEM9: Norway and Switzerland became full ASEM members from the European side but they are not part of the EU. Whether and how these two non-EU countries will be included in the regional coordinator system is remained to be settled.

³⁸⁶ Information given by Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe, Head of the ASEM8 Task Force, in a public event *EU for Asia Brussels Briefing: Asia-Europe Meeting: priorities and challenges*, organised by the European Policy Centre, Brussels, 16 September 2010.

By the end of ASEM9, van Rompuy as the full-time President of the EU Council invited all ASEM partners to Brussels for ASEM10. However, the FMM11 in November 2013 (Delhi-NCR) announced that Italy would host ASEM10 in Milan. In this case, the effect of the implement of the Lisbon Treaty is unclear: would the future ASEM summits eventually be hosted by the full-time President instead of the member state who holds the rotating presidency is unknown. Furthermore, whether the two new non-EU ASEM members, Norway and Switzerland, are going to hold any ASEM summit is another interesting question. The answers to these questions indicate whether the EU can represent the European side of ASEM as a united front in the future, while the current situation seems more heading towards the opposite direction.

On the Asian side, two coordinators are mandated to coordinate the Asian position, one ASEAN country (but not including the ASEAN Secretariat) and one non-ASEAN Asian country. These coordinators are put in a rotating system. The timeframes for the ASEAN Coordinator and the non-ASEAN Coordinator are three years and two years respectively. It is intriguing to compare the respective roles assigned to the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat as the latter has not become a permanent coordinator for the ASEAN countries. Indeed, the ASEAN Secretariat was not even included into the coordinator system, as the ASEAN member states have not designated competence to the Secretariat to act on behalf of them in external relations.

At ASEM8, Australia, New Zealand and Russia were admitted. Although this time all three of them applied to join ASEM from the Asia side, certain ASEM Asian members did not accept them into the Asian group. The temporary solution reached in FMM9 was to create a 'Temporary Third Category' to shelter these three new partners. Yet, the coordination problem compounded as these three countries were not

included either in the EU or Asian side, hence missed those regional preparation meetings before ASEM8.³⁸⁷ Through their contact points and the technical coordination service provided by the organising Taskforce of the Belgian government, the ASEM8 Coordination Team (a special team employed and paid by the European Commission) and the Commission, the three governments were given all relevant information and documents. However, they did not have the chance to share the viewpoints and coordinate their positions in any regional context before ASEM8. The interviewed key informant from the Commission stated that such arrangements would not cause any disadvantage to the ‘third category countries’ as the Asian ASEM members had not really coordinated their position before any ASEM meeting. Moreover, FMM10 decided that Russia, Australia and New Zealand would send representatives to the coming ASEM coordinators’ meetings as “guests of the Chair”, without joining the EU group or the Asian group.³⁸⁸ Importantly, the SOM on 1-2 March 2012 finally reached an agreement to put these three countries into the Asia side. Presumably, they have then been included in the rotating coordination among the Asian non-ASEAN members. The same SOM announced the admission of Bangladesh to the Asian side in ASEM9, meaning the membership of the Asian non-ASEAN members expands to ten.

Despite the existence of the coordinators and the network of ASEM contact points, the organisation of an ASEM meeting still depends heavily on the host country. The host country is responsible from agenda setting to physical logistic arrangement, deciding the list of participants, drafting of the Chairman’s Statement to the

³⁸⁷ Information given by Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe, who headed the ASEM8 Taskforce of Belgium, during a face-to-face interview with the author in Brussels on 16 September 2010.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

organisation of the side-events. Such reliance on the host country means that ASEM meetings differ greatly from each other; hence, the outcomes of each meeting vary according to the host's capability, preference and perception of ASEM. The annex to *the Helsinki Declaration* specially underscored the role of the hosts of the next ASEM summits:

Taking into account the deepening and widening of the process, the central role of the hosts of the next summit and Foreign Ministers' Meeting should be recognised, while ensuring that the geographic balance of the Coordinators' group is maintained. Enhancing the function of the next host(s) can add continuity to the coordination, and facilitate and complement the leading role of the Coordinators' group.

In general, the Heads of State/Government in ASEM summits set the direction of ASEM, decide on actions then instruct different executive arms to carry out the tasks. 'ASEM leaders', 'ministers', 'senior officials' and 'ASEM partners', all representing individual ASEM partner governments, were the most crucial actors. In contrast, the non-state actors, namely civil society actors, international and regional organisations, were much less frequently referred to or were they entrusted with any major role.

5.3.2. International and regional organisations At the international level, among the various multilateral institutions, ASEM's attention is mainly devoted to four: the WTO in trade issues; the UN in the political field; the IMF and World Bank regarding international financial governance.³⁸⁹ These four international organisations are mentioned frequently in the Chairmen's Statements and declarations issued by ASEM

³⁸⁹ This is a summary of analysis of all ASEM official documents including the chairman statements and declaration from summit and ministerial meeting.

summits and MMs. Nevertheless, ‘international organisation’ as a collective term and the aforementioned multilateral institutions are rarely mentioned in the documents on ASEM institutional designs. They are not seen as integral to ASEM, as none of these organisations is designated any role inside the ASEM process or granted a permanent seat in the official meetings. Their involvement in ASEM is passive: only the ‘appropriate international organisations and institutions’ are invited to specific ASEM events if all ASEM partners agree.³⁹⁰

At the regional level, ASEM membership overlaps with the membership of a number of regional or trans-regional organisations, namely the EU, ASEAN, SAARC, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), East Asia Summit (EAS) of the ASEAN+3+3+2 states,³⁹¹ Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), NATO, Council of Europe and APEC. Except the EU (with the European Commission as an individual ASEM partner) and the ASEAN (with its Secretariat as an individual ASEM partner), none of these organisations is granted membership to ASEM. Hence, the roles of the Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat in the ASEM process are exceptional. As discussed above, the participations of these two regional institutions in the ASEM process differ significantly, reflecting an inter-regional imbalance.

While the Commission has been an ASEM partner since inception, the ASEAN Secretariat waited for a decade (until 2006) for its membership. As a supranational institution, the Commission attends ASEM as an individual partner side by side with

³⁹⁰ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 25.

³⁹¹ ‘ASEAN+3+3’ is used to represent the groupings of the ten ASEAN member states and its other Asian counterparts. The first ‘+3’ refers to China, Japan and South Korea, while the second ‘+3’ usually refers to Australia, New Zealand and India. The last ‘+2’ refers to the US and Russia who joined the EAS in 2010.

the member states of the EU and conceives of itself as an under-pinner of the process.³⁹² In the official documents, the Commission and its President are frequently mentioned (three times in *the Helsinki Declaration* and in every summit Chairman's Statement). On the other hand, the ASEAN Secretariat was largely invisible in both *AECF2000* and *the Helsinki Declaration* and mentioned only in the Chairmen's Statements of the three most recent summits. The ASEAN Secretariat is not mandated as a regional coordinator for the ASEAN ASEM member states. Despite gaining an individual seat in ASEM in 2006, the Secretariat has not replaced the rotating coordinator among ASEAN member states. Unlike the Commission, the role of the ASEAN Secretariat is rather invisible.

Interestingly, ASEM partners are sometimes grouped together in regional context and referred to as two collective blocs. The terms 'Asia', 'Europe' and 'regions' are found being used as actors sometimes. *AECF2000* writes 'Asia and Europe, building a comprehensive and future-oriented partnership, should work together to address challenges and to translate them into common opportunities'³⁹³ and the *Helsinki Declaration* states 'ASEM enables Asia and Europe to reap the benefits of globalisation'.³⁹⁴ In other ASEM documents, there are numerous similar references: 'Asia and Europe establish/foster their partnership'; 'cooperation between the two regions'; 'the dialogue between the two regions'; and 'ASEM helps to raise mutual awareness and understanding between Asia and Europe'.

³⁹² European Commission, ASEM, <ec.europa.eu/external_relations/asem/index_en.htm> (accessed on 6 June 2009).

³⁹³ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 5.

³⁹⁴ *Helsinki Declaration*, 2006, paragraph 2.

Indeed, thus far, no ASEM document has defined ‘Asia’ or ‘Europe’. Are they corresponding only to the ASEM membership or embracing other non-ASEM countries? This lack of clarity provokes questions like ‘does “EU” equal “Europe”?’; ‘does Russia belong to Europe/Asia?’; and ‘does “Asia” include only the ASEM Asian partners?’ As defined in Chapter 1, an actor should be able to identify itself from the others, therefore, unless ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ possess distinct identities, they can hardly constitute an independent international actor.

5.3.3. Non-state actors Regarding the non-state actors, the *Helsinki Declaration* remarks that ‘a closer involvement of parliaments, academia and civil society in the broad sense will furthermore greatly contribute to a stronger feeling of ownership and enhance the visibility and awareness of ASEM among the wider public.’³⁹⁵ Yet, what does this ‘close involvement’ mean was not clearly elaborated? The document only reiterated the role of three existing ASEM initiatives – ASEF, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) and the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) – in ‘developing the outreach’.³⁹⁶

Interestingly, parliamentary representatives are grouped together with other sectors of the civil society. Unlike the executive branch of the ASEM governments, the involvement of the legislators in ASEM is rather marginalised. Their presence is seldom found in ASEM official documents. It is indeed not surprising because ASEM has insisted in its informality and non-legal bindingness. Due to the huge variety of government structure amongst ASEM partners, the role of parliament differs greatly from one country to another.

³⁹⁵ *Helsinki Declaration* Annex, 2006, part III.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The general public appears as a concern of the ASEM leaders. The official documents keep repeating the urgency to promote mutual awareness and understanding between the people in the two regions as well as the need to engage the general public in the ASEM process.³⁹⁷ The opening paragraph of the *AECF2000* highlights ‘to build a greater understanding between the people of the two regions’ as one of the three main objectives of the process. One of the reasons behind the creation of the Asia-Europe Foundation was to foster people-to-people exchange between the two regions. ASEF’s work on promoting inter-regional people-to-people exchange has been praised in several of the summit Chairmen’s Statements. Moreover, the key documents have underscored the need to communicate with the public and to increase ASEM’s public awareness.³⁹⁸ These two goals have been further prioritised after ASEM entered its second decade. Nevertheless, these discourses have not been converted into a bigger role for the public in the process; actions involving the general public are limited to ad-hoc opportunities to ASEF activities. The general public has no role in the official ASEM meetings.

ASEF is itself a non-state actor produced by the ASEM process. Established in 1997, it is the sole joint institution of ASEM and is mandated to oversee the process’s socio-cultural pillar. The Foundation is mentioned once in the *ACEF2000*, and five times in the *Helsinki Declaration*. Being a key institution in ASEM’s third pillar, ASEF is mentioned in the social-cultural part of all Chairmen’s Statements, in which

³⁹⁷ For examples, *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 1, 8, 17, 19; *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part III; see also *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM1*, 1996, paragraph 4, 17; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM2*, 1998, paragraph 3; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 7; *Chair’s Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 75.

³⁹⁸ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 19; *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part III.

typically ASEM Heads of State/Government acknowledge its work and reaffirm their support to ASEF's work.

In sum, the gate-keeper power of ASEM partners' governments is obvious. Civil society groups and trade unions have expressed their interest in officially joining the ASEM process even before ASEM1. However, thus far, they can only convene under their own initiatives – Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) and ASEM trade union conference – which are not officially part of ASEM's Track 2. In contrast, the initiative which convenes the business community, Asia-Europe Business Forum, is proposed in the first summit and has been frequently acknowledged in the ASEM official discourses. AEPF is not mentioned at all in ASEM's institution design documents. Only the Chairman's Statement of ASEM1 and that of ASEM8 mentioned it in passing (once each). While the AEBF, ASEF and the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) are listed under 'ASEM in Society' on the *ASEM Infoboard* (the version before March 2012), AEPF was not mentioned.³⁹⁹ These differences in treatment echoed to the critique of a 'planned exclusion of the civil society interest'⁴⁰⁰ which keeps community organisations and policy advocacy groups out of the process.⁴⁰¹ The actual involvement of the various groups of non-state actors is examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

In addition, many of the non-state actors draft recommendations to submit to the Head of State/Government summits, but no institutional mechanism thus far has been

³⁹⁹ This section was not found in the renewed version of *ASEM Infoboard* after March 2012.

⁴⁰⁰ Gilson, 'New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia' (2005): 316.

⁴⁰¹ *The Barcelona Report*, Recommendations from Civil Society on Asia-Europe Relations addressed to the ASEM Leaders (Conference on Connecting Civil Society from Asia & Europe, 16-18 June, 2004), 6.

created to guarantee that they reach the summits. Even though the recommendations from the AEBF and various ASEF-organised conferences are channelled to the summit, there is no guarantee that the Heads of State/Government would actually read them.

All things considered, in ASEM's institutional design various types of actors from different levels and different fields are embraced. The design of the process demonstrates the centrality of the partner governments, which are mainly nation-state governments. Notwithstanding the centrality of the nation-states, the co-existence of other non-traditional entities is acknowledged. Under the current design, involvement of the non-state actors, especially those from the civil society, is passive and insignificant (they are rarely allowed to take part in formal discussions, while their recommendations to the summit are largely ignored). Consequently, the differences in *actorness* between the nation-states and the other actors are huge. After identifying the key actors in ASEM's institutional design, the next section examines what actions have ASEM founders designed to take under the process.

5.4. Expected actions

AECF2000 starts with the following clause which also appears frequently in other ASEM documents:

all [ASEM] Participants agreed to work together to create a new Asia-Europe partnership, to build a greater understanding between the peoples of both regions and to establish a strengthened dialogue among equals.

Other key goals highlighted repeatedly include fostering inter-regional political dialogue; reinforcing inter-regional economic cooperation; increasing inter-regional

trade and investment flows; promoting cooperation in other areas as well as enhancing mutual understanding and awareness between the two regions.⁴⁰² These objectives are also listed in the *ASEM Infoboard*.

For the political pillar, ASEM partners seek to strengthen inter-regional links and partnership so as to manage the complex interdependence amid growing globalisation. They repeatedly emphasise the need to work together to address global challenges such as the negative impacts of globalisation and weapons of mass destruction.

The leaders have designated ASEM as a mean to rationalise multilateralism. *AECF2000* highlights that ASEM can ‘stimulate and facilitate progress in other fora... thereby contribute positively to security, prosperity and sustainable development for the benefit of all and build a new international political and economic order’.⁴⁰³ It is entrusted as one of the platforms for its partners to identify common interest, on both regional and international issues. Eventually, the process is expected to enable its partners to enhance understanding on each other’s stands and opinions on different regional and international events. The founding partners expected ASEM to take forward their dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest to relevant international institutions. For instance, ASEM leaders showed attempts in exchange views on issues like the UN reform, arms control and reform in global financial governance. Moreover, ASEM is supposed to support the rules of international law among the partners.

⁴⁰² *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 2, 7-10, 13, 16; see also *AECF1998*, 1998, paragraph 8-12, 14.

⁴⁰³ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 6, 8; see also <www.asemnfoboard.org>.

For the economic pillar, ASEM is designated to complement and reinforce the WTO's efforts on strengthening an open and rule-based multilateral trading system. ASEM partners also expect the process to foster trade and investment flows between the two regions. The designated means include promoting dialogue and cooperation between the business sectors of the two regions as well as between government and the business sector. Accordingly, ASEM is expected to contribute to sustainable economic growth in both regions.

In the social-cultural pillar, ASEM is entrusted to promote dialogue and cooperation between parliaments, civil society, education institutions, students, as well as the general public in Asia and Europe. More cooperation between the two regions to tackle global issues like public healthcare, food security, sustainable development and transnational crime is also listed as objectives.⁴⁰⁴ Increasing mutual awareness and understanding between the public in the two regions is repeatedly emphasised as a key motive. The list of prioritised areas for intensified cooperation in the social-cultural pillar includes: science and technology, human resources, development, the environment, the fight against illicit drug trade, money-laundering, terrorism and international organised crime, including the exploitation of illegal immigration and the strengthening of cultural links.

Thus far, the goals listed in *AECF1998*, *AECF2000* and *ASEM Infoboard* are rather modest and general. They can be understood as a lowest-common-denominator compromise among the twenty-six founding members of ASEM. Pereira pointed out that the ASEM partners possess divergent views on ASEM's work, while the Asians 'regard[ed] dialogue in itself as an achievement and prefer to talk about

⁴⁰⁴ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 8, 11, 14, 17, 19.

non-contentious issues’, the Europeans ‘tend[ed] to press for tangible results and are interested in taking up contentious issues in order to arrive at conclusions’.⁴⁰⁵ General aims, such as building mutual understanding and strengthening inter-regional links, which are easily accepted by all parties, became the lowest common denominator. Accordingly, there was no assignment for short/medium-term tangible delivery like free-trade-agreement or joint action in WTO or UN negotiations given to ASEM.

On ASEM’s tenth anniversary, the European Commission published *Ten Years of ASEM Global Challenges–Joint Response*. The key objectives of ASEM were reiterated: to strengthen interaction and mutual understanding between the two regions; to foster the inter-regional relations so as to handle the complex interdependence and the challenges arose; to reinforce multilateralism both in political, economic and environmental fields; to stimulate and facilitates other bilateral or multilateral fora between Asia and Europe; to encourage inter-regional trade and investment flows; and to promote business-to-business as well as government-to-business links.⁴⁰⁶ Apart from the management of the complex interdependence and facilitation of other multilateral fora, many of the theoretically deduced functions listed in existing academic studies are absent in the “wish-list” designated to ASEM by the founders.

In comparison, the theoretically-deduced functions are more specific (as discussed in Chapter 2). In the actual institutional design, ASEM is assigned modest and general tasks such as bringing the partners to dialogue, enhancing mutual understanding and exploring common ground between the two regions. Certainly, each ASEM partner would have an individual agenda when joining the process, among which provocative

⁴⁰⁵ Pereira, “The fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit. An assessment” (2005), 22.

⁴⁰⁶ European Commission, *Ten Years of ASEM Global Challenges – Joint Response* (2006), 5-23.

aims such as counterbalancing the US, taming China or promoting the ASEAN as leader in East Asia regionalism would not be explicitly announced.

Additionally, the actors concerned in the ASEM's official discourses on functions also differ from those found in academic studies. While non-state entities are largely absent in the theoretical studies, the *AECF2000* and *ASEM Infoboard* frequently address them. Bringing business communities, civil society as well as the general public to meet with and understand their inter-regional counterparts has been marked as a key function of the ASEM process. Apart from the gaps between the theoretically-deduced functions and the institutional design, the actual achievements of ASEM could differ from both the theoretically-deduced functions and the institutional design. The similarities and differences between the theoretically-deduced, officially-written and actual functions of ASEM are further discussed in Chapter 9.

5.5. Tools equipped for action-taking

After studying the 'wish list' of the ASEM founding partners when they first established the process, the question that follows is 'how is ASEM equipped to accomplish the missions?' From debut, ASEM has been designed to be informal and has avoided institutionalisation (a process to develop common rules to govern behaviours of involved actors, as defined in Chapter 1). Although being at the top of the hierarchy, the summitry is not designed for negotiations or decision-making. Instead, the Heads of State/Government gather biennially to exchange views and information. None of the official documents or discussion outcomes is legally-binding.

Concerning the everyday administration, unlike other international organisations, ASEM has not established any secretariat or headquarters. There is no common

institution to follow up the discussions and agreements or to manage the everyday administration. According to *AECF2000*, the foreign ministers and their senior officials are responsible for the preparation of the biennial summits and the coordination of ASEM-related activities. As noted already, two ASEM coordinators from Europe and two from Asia are mandated to facilitate the coordination and communication among ASEM partners in their respective regions.

The only physical institution, ASEF, is mandated to foster intellectual, people-to-people and cultural exchanges within ASEM. The Foundation depends on voluntary financial contributions from ASEM partners, which could be risky in times of economic hardship. ASEF is accountable and reports to the Board of Governors whose members are appointed by the ASEM partner governments. In terms of independent decision-making power, ASEF cannot be considered as an independent international actor as it has not yet been free to make independent decisions. All work of ASEF is governed under *AECF2000* and Dublin Principles annexed to the Chairman's Statement of ASEM5.

According to the institutional design, the ASEM process can only deliver when its partners propose initiatives, particularly in the political and economic pillars. An ASEM initiative has to be raised by an ASEM partner and supported by all other counterparts.⁴⁰⁷ They can be proposed, discussed and adopted at the summits, ministerial meetings or senior officials' meetings. The initiated activities need to involve partners from both regions and ensure a participation of as many partners as possible. There is no rule on the number of initiatives an ASEM participant needs to propose, or on the content of the proposal. However, the initiator of an event normally

⁴⁰⁷ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 25.

becomes the one who finances, coordinates and hosts it. A collection of adopted initiatives forms a two-year work programme between two summits.

This flexible arrangement has huge potential. If accepted by all partners, proposals like an ASEM Free-Trade Agreement, a united action to condemn a third-state, creation of a common currency in ASEM area or establishment of ASEM army for maritime safety covering all ASEM countries could be made. In practice, the initiatives adopted in the past seventeen years were modest, comprised mainly of ad-hoc activities and one-off seminars or conferences for views and information exchanges. Rather remarkably, ASEM has gathered ministers of thirteen different policy fields,⁴⁰⁸ these gatherings were once again just limited to information and views exchanges though. The ministers discuss issues and adopt initiatives in their relevant policy field; while the discussions are informal and participation in the initiative are voluntary. It is up to the individual partners to implement the initiatives. No rule is set to require a partner to take part in an initiated activity. There is no monitoring or follow-up mechanism on how an ASEM activity is conducted and received. Therefore, neither the quantity, quality nor the participation rate of the initiative is guaranteed. In practice, when ASEM partners have heavy workloads, it is unrealistic to expect them to dedicate a huge amount of time and human resources to ASEM activities, which are neither legally-binding nor offering any immediate rewards.

After evaluations on the tenth anniversary, ASEM partners introduced the Issue-based Leadership mechanism so as to generate more tangible deliveries. Under the Issue-based Leadership, individual ASEM partner volunteers to lead (or be a shepherd

⁴⁰⁸ Table 6.4 listed all ASEM Ministerial Meetings took place between 1996 and 2012.

of) a sector or issue in which it has ‘a particular interest and expertise’.⁴⁰⁹ The leadership will be switched between Asia and Europe every two years, while each term would be four years in maximum. Other partners can volunteer as co-sponsors. This new mechanism also attempts to balance participation between ASEM partners. ASEM7 endorsed the first list of issue-leaders as described in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: List of Issue-based Leadership adopted in ASEM7

Issues	Interested Partners	
	Asian	European
Development of SMEs	China, Korea	Germany
Inter-cultural Dialogue	Korea	-
Culture/Tourism	China, Vietnam, Thailand	-
Education/Human Resources	Vietnam	Germany
Pandemic Control	China, Japan (Avian Influenza), Vietnam (HIV)	UK (Avian Influenza)
Transportation	China	Lithuania
Labour/Employment	-	Germany
Climate Change	Japan	Poland, Denmark
Interfaith and Counter-Terrorism	Indonesia, the Philippines	Spain
Energy Security/ Energy Efficiency	Singapore, the Philippines	-
Food Security	Thailand	-
International Migration	the Philippines	-
Finance	-	Spain
Life Long Learning	-	Denmark

In the above list of Issue-based Leadership, the repetitive appearance of several partners (namely, China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Germany; which are followed by Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Denmark and Spain) is obvious. Other partners, especially the newer ones, seem inactive. The effectiveness of such mechanism to improve the balance of participation among ASEM partners remains questionable. Moreover, the actors volunteered to contribute to the Issue-based Leadership are all nation-states, reflecting again a state-centralism of ASEM. In ASEM9, the first term of the Issue-based Leadership completed the four-year mandate. There was no reviewing

⁴⁰⁹ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM7*, 2008, Annex III.

or renewing the mandate in ASEM9 or the FMM followed ASEM9. Instead, the Chair of FMM11 (India) introduced another mechanism ‘Collated List of Interested ASEM Members for Tangible Cooperation’ (shown in Table 5.2 below). The content was indeed very similar to the Issue-based Leadership, in which the ‘like-mind members’ named the issue areas which they were interested in elaborating concrete cooperation. However, no timeframe or other details of this new initiative was given.

In sum, ASEM has adopted a low-institutionalised and informal approach. There is no official platform to produce and store the written record of meetings and activities. The Chairman’s Statement is the sole regular written document produced after the summits and the MMs. They are prepared by the host of that particular ASEM meeting, hence, can be very different in format, style and content. Notably, the SOMs have not produced any public documents, with the exception of those from the Senior Officials’ Meetings on Trade and Investment. Chairs of the SOMs do take notes which are subsequently circulated among participants, but do not publish those documents.

Instead of making ASEM an independent inter-regional institution with its own administrator, the founding members decided that the administration ought to be based on their governments. Introduction of the regional coordinator system, together with the admission of the European Commission and ASEAN Secretariat as full members, does give a regional accent to ASEM. However, the process remains more inter-state than inter-regional.

Table 5.2: The Collated List of Interested ASEM Members for Tangible Cooperation adopted in FMM11

Areas of Tangible Cooperation	Interested Partners	
	Asian	European
Disaster Management and Mitigation, Building Rescue and Relief Capacities, Technologies and Innovation in Rescue Equipments & Techniques	Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam	Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland
Efficient and Sustainable Water Management, Innovations in Water & Waste Management	Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Singapore Vietnam	Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Spain,
SME Cooperation	Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan	Greece, Hungary, Malta
Renewable Energy: mitigation, adaptation, financing and technological innovations	Brunei Darussalam, India, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines	Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Spain
Energy Efficiency Technologies	Brunei Darussalam, China, India, Mongolia, Pakistan	Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Spain,
Higher Education	Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand,	Ireland, Latvia, Poland, United Kingdom
Vocational Training & Skills Development	China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam	Ireland, Netherlands, Latvia, United Kingdom
Food Safety Issues, including training of Farmers	China, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand	Netherlands, Slovakia
Education and Human Resources Development	India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan	Greece, Hungary
Waste Management: more efficient use of material resources, the waste sector as a central player in the economy with waste to energy & more efficient reuse & recycling models	India, Singapore	Denmark, Lithuania, Netherlands
Promote Trade and Investment/Involve Private Sectors	India, Lao PDR, Myanmar	Poland
Poverty Reduction	Lao PDR, Myanmar	Ireland, Poland

5.6. Conclusion

ASEM's design was articulated by its founding members, twenty-five nation-states plus the European Commission, in its early years. Six key principles were adopted as fundamental norms for the newly designed process: equal partnership, open and evolutionary, enhancement of mutual understanding and awareness, multi-dimensionality, informality, and dual-track system. Low-institutionalisation and informality have been emphasised. On one hand, these principles favour certain functions of the process and certain type of actors. On the other hand, some functions and actors are disabled.

Although ASEM's institutional design allows the presence of a wide range of actors from different levels, the driver seat is dominated by the nation-states. Apart from creating a new framework for different groups of actors to meet their inter-regional counterparts (e.g. Asian businessmen meet European businessmen, or Asian students meet European students), ASEM does not project the voice and influence of non-state actors to the international stage. In the institutional design, these actors are recognised and distinguished from each other but not engaged in decision-making (not even on when and how they convene) or action-taking. In other words, *actorness* of the non-state actors in international relations remains low.

In terms of institutionalisation, ASEM was very much designed by its founders to be a views and information sharing platform. It was not tailored as a delivery process. ASEM has no independent decision-making mechanism or action execution ability (neither tool nor financial means). Seemingly, the ASEM founding members did not plan ambitiously or intend to relinquish any of their competence when establishing

ASEM, hence, did not equip the process with the means to act independently. These missing elements mean ASEM is different from other formal and legally-binding multilateral and regional regimes. The process serves mainly as a forum for gathering and view exchanges. Despite being members of many other formal multilateral regimes, the constituent members of ASEM have preferred to minimise institutionalisation in the building of ASEM. Up till ASEM9, further institutionalisation is still rejected. Unless there is a change in the institutional setting, ASEM cannot become an international actor in its own right.

In the construction of a new cooperative framework, ASEM, the rule-setting power lies in the hand of the founding members. The summit-driven top-down nature affirms such arrangements. Instead of fully embracing inter-regionalism, ASEM's principles are more state-centric. The nation-state remains the foundation unit of the official track (Track 1), they control who to include in Track 2 as well as how the non-state actors' are involved: nation-states have not shared their power with the non-state actors. Neither do the ASEM partner governments show much willingness to establish ties with the non-state actors. Even though the business community is given higher priority in the process, the Heads of State/Government have still no intention to establish any regular channel of contact with them under the ASEM framework.

From its institutional design, ASEM has developed as a state-centric forum, which serves as an additional tool for nation-states to sustain their centrality on the international stage. The nation-states have demonstrated their reluctance to transfer power to other actors or to unfold the role of the non-state actors. The presence of the European Commission in the rule-setting stage did not bring any breakthrough in this respect. Following the examination of institutional approach to illustrate how the

ASEM process 'is designed to be', the next three chapters determine what has happened in reality from an empirical approach. The empirical findings are then compared to the institutional design and also to the theoretical assumptions in the existing studies.

Chapter Six

ASEM Track 1: a platform only for nation-states?

6.1. Introduction

This chapter first reviews what has taken place in ASEM official track, or called Track 1, from ASEM1 to ASEM9. This overview serves as a summary of the development of ASEM since its inauguration. The period from 1996 (the first ASEM summit in Bangkok) to 2012 (the year when the ninth summit in Vientiane took place) are looked at, a much longer time than other studies have covered.⁴¹⁰ Whilst existing academic literature on ASEM has mainly focused on the biennial summits, the recurring meetings held at other governmental levels (i.e. those in the form of ministerial and senior official meetings) have been largely neglected. Thereby, this chapter devotes to address this deficit by extending the study to cover these important but overlooked parts of ASEM. Subsequently, the different degrees of activity of the ASEM partners are distinguished. The active contributors to the process as well as the reasons behind their active engagement are identified.

Official documents, including the Chairmen's Statements, special statements and declarations published after the ASEM summits and MMs; as well as reports, public speeches and press-communications released by individual ASEM partners, are major

⁴¹⁰ Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002); Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different Dimensions of ASEM* (2003); Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism" (2006): 1-42; Bart Gaens ed., *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM* (2008); Robles, *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (2008).

sources of information for this chapter. Notably, the official ASEM meetings strictly restrict the accessibility to the delegates of the partner governments. Non-members of these delegations, including journalists and academics, have never granted opportunity for direct observation. It is, thus, difficult to report and research the exact details during the official meetings from a third party's viewpoint. This analysis has noted the limitations of having only the ASEM official documents as source of information, in particular, the complete course of the meetings is not recorded. Still, this content analysis provides valid and rich information on the topics discussed as well as the leaders' common views on the covered issues.

Technically, the drafts of the Chairmen's Statements and joint declarations, together with the discussion agenda, are prepared in advance by the host government then circulated among the partners for comments. Usually, the SOMs discuss and finalise the discussion agenda before the summits and ministerial meetings. Moreover, a session of the plenary meeting is devoted to the final discussion/negotiation of the joint official documents. Consequently, the final version available publicly is carefully tailored, sometimes even negotiated word for word.⁴¹¹ Points which fail to gain consensus are reworded or deleted. As a result, some sensitive issues end up being removed from the final version of the summits' official records. For instance, after ASEM2, the host of the London summit, the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, stated in a press conference that human right issues were discussed during the summit.⁴¹² Yet, nothing about human right was found in the respective Chairman's Statement. Therefore, this research treats these official documents as the lowest

⁴¹¹ See footnote no. 234 in Chapter 3.

⁴¹² Cited from Lim, "The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process1: Issues for ASEM III" (2001): 4.

common denominator amongst ASEM partners. This chapter uses them as general evidence on what topics are covered in the ASEM meetings. The details of the discussions, including the topics which failed to make to the final version of the official documents, or how consensus was reached go beyond the coverage of this research. Still, these official documents, as the main source of information, are able to provide a unique and valid list of most topics covered in the discussions.

6.2. The summits

In ASEM's structure, the biennial heads-of-state summit tops the hierarchy. It is the most important form of ASEM consultation. Since 1996, nine summits took place, held in Asia and Europe alternatively (Table 6.1). Thus far, the regularity of the summits has been maintained, although certain partners have demonstrated their disinterest through abstaining from sending their heads to the summits.

Table 6.1: ASEM summits' host countries and dates

Summit	Host city	Dates
ASEM1	Bangkok	1-2 March 1996
ASEM2	London	3-4 April, 1998
ASEM3	Seoul	20-21 October, 2000
ASEM4	Copenhagen	23-24 September, 2002
ASEM5	Hanoi	8-9 October, 2004
ASEM6	Helsinki	10-11 September, 2006
ASEM7	Beijing	24-25 October, 2008
ASEM8	Brussels	4-5 October 2010
ASEM9	Vientiane	5-6 November 2012
ASEM10	Milan	to be held in the second half of 2014

During these summits, the Head of State/Government are left alone, no minister or advisor is allowed to accompany their Heads (yet, some Head of State/Government would bring interpreters). In the beginning, partners from the EU side demanded the participation of their ministers in the summit, whereas the Asian side persisted in the

‘leader-only’ condition.⁴¹³ The argument favouring the ‘leader-only’ setting was that it could generate an informal atmosphere for the leaders to freely and candidly exchange their viewpoints and to build personal connections. In the plenary room, the Heads of State/Government exchange information and views on various issues, set the general framework and agree on a list of activities for the following two years. These two-year programmes usually include a long list of events, both in official and unofficial tracks, making the ASEM process more than summitry.

Corresponding to ASEM’s tri-pillared structure, discussions during the summits are conducted according to the three streams – political, economic and other areas. The Chairmen’s Statements, except that of ASEM8, have separate sections for each pillar, plus a section reviewing new regional developments in Asia and Europe and a section about the ‘future of ASEM’.⁴¹⁴ Except the first two versions, each summit is given an overarching theme (Table 6.2). However, these themes reflect only a small part of the actual discussions, which always cover a wide range of topics.

The key focus of a summit is usually reflected in the respective declaration/statement issued. Thus far, twelve thematic declarations were produced. As illustrated by Table 6.2, the summits often have their agenda hijacked by pressing international issues.⁴¹⁵ For instance, ASEM2 was occupied by the 1997/8 Asian Financial Asian Crisis, and the Heads of State/Government issued the Financial Statement to demonstrate their

⁴¹³ “Asia-Europe FMs to Meet Again in Bangkok?”, *Bangkok Post*, 3 February 1996; “Asia-Europe Meet ‘Too Vital to be One-time Affair’”, *Straits Times*, 4 February 1996.

⁴¹⁴ This usually refers to the immediate two years after a summit.

⁴¹⁵ See also Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 63; Voicu, “ASEM and the Management of Global Crisis” (2008): 21.

concerns with the crisis.⁴¹⁶ ASEM3, which took place just after the historical first Inter-Korean Summit, was to a certain degree overshadowed by the peace process in the Korean Peninsula and the award of the Nobel peace prize to the then South Korean President Kim Dae Jung. The 2001 September 11 tragedy led to a domination of security issues in the Copenhagen summit, whereas the agenda of ASEM7 and ASEM8 were occupied by the global financial crisis and its aftermath.

Table 6.2: Overarching theme and special issues of each ASEM summit

Summit	Overarching theme	Dominant event that time	Special Declaration/Statement
ASEM1	-	-	-
ASEM2		Asian Financial Crisis	Financial Statement
ASEM3	Partnership for Prosperity and Stability in the New Millennium	1 st Inter-Korean Summit	Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsular
ASEM4	International situation in the aftermath of 11 September and new security issues	9-11 Tragedy	Political Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsular + Declaration on Cooperation against International Terrorism
ASEM5	Further Revitalising and Substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership	-	Hanoi Declaration on Closer ASEM Economic Partnership + Hanoi Declaration on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilisations
ASEM6	10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges - Joint Responses		ASEM6 Declaration on Climate Change + Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM
ASEM7	Vision and Action: Towards a Win-Win Solution	08/09 Global Financial Crisis	Statement of ASEM7 on the International Financial Situation + Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development
ASEM8	Quality of life, achieving greater well-being and more dignity for all citizens	aftermaths of the 08/09 Global Financial Crisis	Brussels Declaration on more Effective Global Economic Governance
ASEM9	Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity	Financial situation in Eurozone	Vientiane Declaration on Strengthening Partnership for Peace and Development

⁴¹⁶ Bart Gaens, “ASEM as an Economy-oriented Partnership”, in *Europe-Asia Inter-regional Relations*, Gaens ed. (2008), 38; see also <www.aseminfoboard.org/page.phtml?code=Summits_ASEM2>; C. Severino Rodolfo, Statement of ASEAN Secretary-General on the outcome of the Second Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM2), Jakarta, 6 April 1998, <www.aseansec.org/3262.htm> (accessed 3 March 2008).

Thus far, ASEM's agenda seems to be determined by international events instead of determining the agenda of multilateral discussions. Accordingly, it did not appear able to set agenda for multilateral fora (function deduced from liberal-institutionalism). On the other hand, ASEM serves its partners as an additional platform, sometime as the first or even the unique one, to exchange information and views on newly emerged international issues. For example, the Lehman Brothers collapsed in September 2008, which marked the beginning of the Global Financial Crisis; it was a month before the ASEM7, the Beijing summit became the first large-scale gathering of international leaders to discuss the outbreak of the crisis. The flexibility of the ASEM agenda is clear. It enables ASEM partners to exchange views on very timely issues. However, flexibility and rapid reaction to current events also mean that the discussions from summit to summit would be disrupted, thus, hampering the chance to explore issues at length and in depth.

There were some exceptions: ASEM1, ASEM5 and ASEM6 did not encounter any landmark international issue. At the inauguration, ASEM1 was primarily devoted to discussions about the principles and working mechanisms for ASEM, as well as to allow the Heads of State/Government to familiarise with the new process and with each other. ASEM5 was described as a 'transition summit', with nothing to dominate the discussion.⁴¹⁷ One highlight was the first round of enlargement of the process. The Helsinki summit marked the tenth anniversary of the process, and some time was devoted to explore ways to improve the working method of ASEM. Advocated by the

⁴¹⁷ Pereira, "The fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit. An assessment" (2005): 19; see also Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism" (2005): 26.

host (Finland), issues of climate change and sustainable development became the key focus in discussions.

Importantly, the summits, which last typically one-and-a-half days, cover more than one topic. Table 6.3 summarises the topics recorded in the nine summit Chairmen's Statements. The length of the list indicates that a wide range of issues are covered. Several topics constantly appear in the ASEM discussions: reform of the United Nations, counter-terrorism, security on the Korean Peninsula, new developments in regional integration/cooperation in Asia and Europe, and cooperation within the WTO. Furthermore, suggestions on how to foster interaction between the public in Asia and Europe, ASEF's work and the need for more people-to-people contact are always found on the summit Chairmen's Statements. Institutional matters like enlargement and working principles (such as whether to create a Secretariat or to amend the format of the discussion sessions) are discussed sometimes. Moreover, ASEM's reactive nature brings a number of issues to the discussion agenda on ad-hoc basis, such as the war and state-building in Bosnia as well as the 'Y2K' computer problem discussed in ASEM2. Noteworthy, due to the unease of some Asian partners, sensitive issues like human rights, Myanmar and East Timor were excluded from both the official summit agendas and the Chairmen's Statements in the early years of the process.⁴¹⁸

The number of issues discussed in ASEM1 was the least. As time passes, more and more issues appear on ASEM's discussion table. The Seoul summit was the first one

⁴¹⁸ "Human Rights Issue Not On Agenda For Bangkok Meeting", *Bangkok Post*, 24 February 1996; "Sensitive Issues To Stay On The Agenda", *South China Morning Post*, 27 February 1996; Ray Heath, "Asia-Europe Summit Endorses Proposal For New Trading Link", *South China Morning Post*, 2 March 1996; Jayakumar, "Fresh ground covered on Asia-Europe ties", *Strait Times*, 16 February 1997; Lim, "The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process1" (2001): 2; ; Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 32.

to include more political issues. However, similar to the situation in the Bangkok summit, political issues were briefly touched upon in ASEM2 and ASEM3; no follow-up actions were initiated either. In contrast, ASEM4 was very concentrated on international security. The discussion agenda diversified again from ASEM5 onwards. Particularly, ASEM5 covered a wide variety of political issues at the expense of economic cooperation. In contrast, the following four summits concentrated much more on economic matters, especially ASEM7 in Beijing. The Beijing Summit was mostly concerned with the Global Financial Crisis and the possible solutions. Due to the severe impact of the 2008/09 Global Financial Crisis on the societies, ASEM8 devoted time to issues like social cohesion, social safety nets and labour protection. In Addition, the growing importance of cooperation in sustainable development was reflected in the introduction of a separate section of the ASEM6 Chairman's Statement. This was, then, inherited by the two successive summits. In the most recent summit, sustainable development was merged into field like economic growth, supply of food, energy and water, as well as natural disaster mitigation. Less attention was paid on environmental issues compared with the previous three summits.

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show that most of the issues discussed in ASEM summits are trans-national, many are international. None of the issues can be handled by a single ASEM partner alone. Accordingly, the summits offer ASEM partners a platform to seek information on unfamiliar international issues and to communicate with each other on international or regional issues. On the other side of the coin, the wide range of topics reflects a lack of focus and a lack of what Segal called 'subsidiarity' (what can be best done at the ASEM level).⁴¹⁹ Thus far, the Heads of State/Government

⁴¹⁹ Segal, "Thinking strategically about ASEM: the subsidiarity question" (1997): 124-34.

have not showed much interest in progressing to any concrete negotiation or cooperation. The subsidiarity question does not seem to concern ASEM partners too much either.

Table 6.3: Topics covered in ASEM summits listed in the Chairmen's Statements.

	Issues covered	ASEM1	ASEM2	ASEM3	ASEM4	ASEM5	ASEM6	ASEM7	ASEM8	ASEM9
Regional developments	ASEAN		√	√		√	√	√	√	√
	East Asia regional cooperation		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	EU		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	Afghanistan					√	√	√	√	√
	East Timor			√			√			
	Iran's nuclear program						√	√	√	√
	Iraq				√	√	√			
	Korean Peninsular		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Kosovo		√	√						
	Middle East			√	√	√	√		√	√
	Myanmar					√	√	√	√	
	Others		2 ⁴²⁰				1 ⁴²¹			1 ⁴²²
Political pillar	Arms control & disarmament (including biological and chemical weapons)	√	√	√			√			√
	Energy security, supply and efficiency			√			√	√	√	√
	Non-proliferation of WMD	√	√	√		√	√		√	√
	Piracy and marine security			√			√		√	√
	Reduction of nuclear weapon	√		√					√	√
	Terrorism	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	UN reforms	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
	Millennium Development Goals			√		√	√	√	√	√
Economic pillar	Domestic economic/financial reform			√		√				
	Financial crises		√	√				√	√	√
	Human resource development	√	√	√	√		√	√		√
	Information and Communication Technology			√	√			√	√	
	Intellectual Property Rights						√	√		
	Involvement of business community	√	√	√			√	√	√	√

⁴²⁰ Bosnia and Cambodia

⁴²¹ Aceh Monitoring Mission

⁴²² North Africa

	IPAP, TFAP		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	
	Need of more inter-regional trade and investment flows	√		√				√		√	
	Oil prices			√		√		√			
	Science and technology cooperation for economic benefits	√	√	√	√		√	√			
	WTO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	Others						1 ⁴²³				
socio-cultural and other areas	ASEF's work		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	Consequences of globalisation			√	√	√	√				
	Cultural diversity and civilisation					√	√	√		√	
	Development in general	√	√						√		
	Economic and social disparity			√		√		√			
	Education & vocational training	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	
	Food security and supply		√	√			√	√	√	√	
	Human rights			√				√	√	√	
	Illicit drug trade	√	√	√					√	√	
	Labour and employment						√		√	√	
	Migrant (legal & illegal)	√		√		√	√		√	√	
	Money laundering	√	√	√							
	Natural disaster response & management							√	√	√	
	People-to-people contacts	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	
	Poverty alleviation	√	√				√		√		
	Public health care	√	√	√		√		√			
	Rights of women and children	√	√	√							
	Social Safety Net			√					√	√	
	Climate change	√					√	√	√	√	
	Biodiversity	√					√	√	√		
	Deforestation	√					√	√	√		
	Kyoto/ post-Kyoto Protocol	√	√	√	√	√			√		
	Marine environment	√					√	√			
	Water resources management	√						√	√	√	
		Others	1 ⁴²⁴	1 ⁴²⁵						1 ⁴²⁶	1 ⁴²⁷
		ASEM administration	√	√			√	√	√	√	√

⁴²³ IMF reform

⁴²⁴ Preservation of cultural heritages

⁴²⁵ Y2K computer problem

⁴²⁶ Social cohesion

⁴²⁷ Tourism

From the analysis of the Chairmen's Statements, it is observed that ASEM partners always emphasise the co-existence of other multilateral fora. Regional or multilateral frameworks, such as the ARF, Six Party Talk, the WTO and the UN, are named as platforms for concrete cooperation. Nevertheless, these institutions are seldom featured as independent actors. They are referred to as clubs or cooperative mechanisms which bring various countries together to collaborate or carry out missions mandated by their member-states. Their effectiveness is delineated as dependent on the support of their members rather than on their own *actorness*. An exception is the UN, who is referred to as an independent international actor in a few ASEM official documents.⁴²⁸

In sum, the biennial summit has been a means of consultation among ASEM partners at the highest level. As a result of the informality and multi-dimensionality, a vast range of topics is discussed. As each partner has the right to put any issue on the discussion table, the agenda reflects the divergence of interests. This arrangement allows ASEM partners to easily shift attention when an unplanned event happens. From a positive angle, ASEM is equipped with great flexibility. On the other hand, it allows competitions between partners to put issues on the summit agenda, the so-called 'laundry-list syndrome', which lead to dilution of the attention to each issue.

Furthermore, the summits do not generate any legal-binding agreement. They serve more as 'catch-up' gatherings for partners to update each other about their views and positions on various regional or international issues, especially the newly emerged ones. Collective actions listed in the summit Chairmen's Statements and special

⁴²⁸ For example, *Chairman's Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 5; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM5*, 2004, paragraph 1.6, 1.9, 1.12; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM6*, 2006, paragraph 12; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM6*, 2008, paragraph 19.

declarations have been vague and intangible. Typical agreed actions include: ‘leaders affirmed or reaffirmed their commitment on’ a norm or value; ‘the Heads of State/Government stressed the importance of’ a norm or idea; ‘the leaders expressed their concern on’ a situation; and ‘the Heads of State/Government shared the view’ on some general aspects. Only occasionally the leaders set more tangible goals: in ASEM4 they ‘tasked ASEM Coordinators to set up an action-oriented Taskforce’ to foster ASEM economic partnership;⁴²⁹ in ASEM7 they ‘tasked Senior Officials to further explore ways to achieve greater visibility of ASEM’;⁴³⁰ in ASEM8 they instructed the Ministers of Labour to further develop common strategic on labour standard, social safety net and labour market.⁴³¹ However, tangible results remain limited thus far.

6.3. The Ministerial and Senior Official Meetings

Between two summits, ASEM partner governments’ ministers and senior officials (and the European Commissioners and their senior officials) responsible for different policy fields gather upon the request of the Heads of State/Government. The summits usually set guidance and direction as well as endorse initiatives undertaken in these second-tier level meetings. However, owing to their irregular occurrences, it is not easy to systematically review the content and achievement of these MMs and SOMs. Information provided by the *ASEM Infoboard* and ASEM official documents (including the Chairmen’s Statements and special thematic declarations issued from the MMs) is useful, but incomplete. Therefore, this research explores other available

⁴²⁹ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM4*, 2002, paragraph 21.

⁴³⁰ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM7*, 2008, paragraph 45.

⁴³¹ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 31.

sources, namely the official websites of ASEM partners' Foreign Ministry, published academic works and media reportage, so as to create a complete list of all the MMs and SOMs between ASEM1 and ASEM9. In total, forty-nine ASEM MMs took place before ASEM9 (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: ASEM ministerial meetings from 1996 to 2012⁴³²

Summit	Host city	Dates
ASEM1	Bangkok	1-2 March 1996
FMM1	Singapore	15 February 1997
FinMM1	Bangkok	19 September 1997
EMM1	Makuhari	27-28 September 1997
ASEM2	London	3-4 April, 1998
FinMM2	Frankfurt	15-16 January 1999
FMM2	Berlin	28-29 March 1999
EMM2	Berlin	9-10 October 1999
Sci&TechMM1	Beijing	14-15 October 1999
ASEM3	Seoul	20-21 October, 2000
FinMM3	Kobe	13-14 January 2001
FMM3	Beijing	24-25 May 2001
EMM3	Hanoi	10-11 September 2001
EnvMM1	Beijing	17 January 2002
MigrantMM1	Lanzarote	5 April 2002
FMM4	Madrid	6-7 June 2002
FinMM4	Copenhagen	5-6 July 2002
EMM4	Copenhagen	17-19 September 2002
ASEM4	Copenhagen	23-24 September, 2002
FinMM5	Bali	5-6 July 2003
FMM5	Bali	23-24 July 2003
EMM5	Dalian	23-24 July 2003
EnvMM2	Lecce	13 October 2003
CultureMM1	Beijing	3-4 December 2003
FMM6	Kildare	17-18 April 2004
<u>FinMM7 (cancelled)</u>	<u>Brussels</u>	<u>5 July 2004</u>
<u>EMM6 (cancelled)</u>	<u>Rotterdam</u>	<u>16-17 September 2004</u>
ASEM5	Hanoi	8-9 October, 2004

⁴³² “FMM” refers to Foreign Ministers’ Meeting; “FinMM” refers to Finance Ministers’ Meeting; “EMM” refers to Economic Ministers’ Meeting; “Sci&TechMM” refers to Meeting of Ministers in charge of Science and Technology; “EnvMM” refers to Environment Ministers’ Meeting; “MigrantMM” refers to Migration Ministers’ Meeting; “CultureMM” refers to Culture Ministers’ Meeting; “LabourMM” refers to Labour Ministers’ Meeting; “ICTMM” refers to Meeting of Ministers in charge of Information and Communication Technology; “SMEMM” refers to Meeting of Ministers in charge of Small and Medium Enterprises; “EduMM” and “HighEduMM” refers to Education Ministers’ Meeting; “EnergyMM” refers to Energy Ministers’ Meeting; “TransportMM” refers to Transport Ministers’ Meeting.

FMM7	Kyoto	6-7 May 2005
CultureMM2	Paris	7-8 June 2005
FinMM6	Tianjin	25-26 June 2005
High-level Economic Officials' Meeting	Rotterdam	16-17 September 2005
FinMM7	Vienna	8-9 April 2006
LabourMM1	Potsdam	3-5 September 2006
ASEM6	Helsinki	10-11 September, 2006
ICTMM1	Hanoi	30 November-1 December 2006
EnvMM3	Copenhagen	24-26 April 2007
FMM8	Hamburg	28-29 May 2007
SMEMM	Beijing	October 2007
CultureMM3	Kuala Lumpur	21-24 April 2008
EduMM1	Berlin	5-6 May 2008
FinMM8	Jeju Island	14-17 June 2008
EMM7 (cancelled)	Bali	10-11 July 2008
LabourMM2	Bali	14-15 October 2008
ASEM7	Beijing	24-25 October, 2008
HighEduMM2	Hanoi	14-15 May 2009
FMM9	Hanoi	25-26 May 2009
EnergyMM1	Brussels	17-18 June 2009
TransportMM1	Vilnius	19-20 October 2009
FinMM9	Madrid	17-18 April 2010
CultureMM4	Poznan	9-10 September 2010
ASEM8	Brussels	4-5 October 2010
LabourMM3	Leiden	12-14 December 2010
EduMM3	Copenhagen	9-10 May 2011
FMM10	Godollo	6-7 June 2011
TransportMM2	Chengdu	24-26 October 2011
EnvMM4	Ulaanbaatar	22-23 May 2012
CultureMM5	Yogyakarta	18-19 September 2012
FinMM10	Bangkok	15 October 2012
LabourMM4	Hanoi	24-26 October 2012
ASEM9	Vientiane	5-6 November 2012

The three core MMs were that of Foreign Ministers, Finance Ministers and Economic Ministers. The ASEM process witnessed a proliferation of sectoral meetings, especially between ASEM3 and ASEM4. This rise in diversification makes the process truly multi-dimensional. Other sectors covered thus far include Culture, Environment, Information and Communication Technologies, Small and Medium Enterprises, Labour and Employment, Interior Affairs, Transport, as well as Energy Security.

Apart from the proliferation of sectors, the ASEM process has also increased in institutionalisation. Originally only the Foreign Ministers, Economic Ministers and Financial Ministers met regularly, while other ministers met on an *ad-hoc* basis. The FMM takes place every other year, usually in the non-summit year. The eighth Finance Ministers' Meeting in 2008 started a 'Finance Ministers' Meeting process' to fix the interval of the FinMM to be once every two year while requiring their deputies to meet annually. Nevertheless, since 2005, the Economic Ministers' Meeting has halted. In 2007 and 2008, Indonesia attempted to resume the Economic Ministers' Meeting but failed to secure enough participants. On the other hand, the second Culture Ministers' Meeting in 2005 proposed to become regular, the proposal was approved by the Heads of State/Government in ASEM6. Upon the co-leadership of Germany and Vietnam (Issue-based Leadership adopted in ASEM7), the idea to convene the Education Ministers was well received among ASEM partners. The volunteer partners to host successive Education Ministers' Meeting have lined up till 2017 (that will be EduMM6 then). During their first meeting in 2009, ASEM Ministers of Transport agreed to convene every two year. As such, the Foreign, Finance, Culture, Education and Transport ministers are at present convening regularly under the ASEM framework.

The ASEM MMs focus on their respective policy field, except the Foreign Ministers who are mandated to manage a wide range of issues and in charge of the preparation for the biennial summits. Similar to the summits, the MMs do not produce legally-binding agreements or obligatory plans of action. Ministers exchange views and experiences, develop mutual understanding and sometimes call for seminar and symposium on specific topics. Some MMs have come up with more concrete

action-plan. For instance, the FinMMs produced the Anti-money Laundering Initiative and a computerised communication network among ASEM Finance Ministries in 1997; ASEM Contingency Dialogue Mechanism for Emergent Economic and Financial Events was adopted by the FinMM in 2005 (as part of the Tianjin Initiative). ASEM EduMMs created the ASEM Education Secretariat and the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning in 2009. Still, implementation of actions is subjected to individual partners' voluntary contribution and political will. In practice, the ministers do not undertake any actual actions; they delegate their senior officials to do so.

Before or between the MMs and summits, the relevant senior officials convene to prepare for the meetings. The Heads of State/Government and ministers sometimes demand special SOMs to work on technical sector-focus issues, such as the ASEM Customs Director-General Commissioner meetings since 1996 and ASEM Conferences of Director-General of Immigration. The SOMs report to their corresponding MMs. Table 6.5 lists the ASEM SOMs from 1995 to 2012. The table compiles information from various ASEM partners' foreign affairs ministry websites and *ASEM Infoboard*, but it probably does not cover all SOMs. The actual number of ASEM SOMs would be more than the eighty-eight listed here. Noteworthy, not only the SOMs' occurrence is irregular, but their format varies. For instance, each SOMTI produces and publish a Chairman's Statement, but the SOM of foreign affairs and finance deputies do not issue any public documents.

Table 6.5: ASEM SOMs from December 1995 to November 2012

SOM	Host city	Dates
Foreign Affairs SOM		
SOM1	Madrid	19 December 1995
SOM2	Dublin	20 December 1996
SOM3	Luxembourg	30-31 October 1997
SOM4	London	19-20 February 1998
SOM5	Bangkok	27-28 October 1998
SOM6	Rovaniemi	2-4 November 1999
SOM7	Lisbon	2-3 May 2000
SOM8	Seoul	19-20 September 2000
SOM9	Stockholm	25-27 April 2001
SOM10	Lanzarote	4-5 April 2002
SOM11	Kildare	16 April 2004
SOM12	Hanoi	6-7 October 2004
SOM13	Jakarta	11-12 March 2005
SOM14	Kyoto	5 May 2005
SOM15	London	29-30 November 2005
SOM16	Vienna	8 March 2006
SOM17	Hameenlinna	18-19 June 2006
SOM18	Helsinki	9 September 2006
SOM19	Berlin	24-25 January 2007
SOM20	Guilin City	29-30 October 2007
SOM21	Ljubljana	2-3 March 2008
SOM22	Beijing	29-30 June 2008
SOM23	Beijing	22-23 October 2008
SOM24	Hanoi	19-20 January 2009
SOM25	Prague	2-3 February 2009
SOM26	Hanoi	24 May 2009
SOM27	Madrid	24 January 2010
SOM28	Phnom Penh	5-6 May 2010
SOM29	Brussels	13-15 July 2010
SOM30	Brussels	3 October 2010
SOM31	Copenhagen	27-28 January 2011
SOM-(cancelled)	Tokyo	28-29 March 2011
SOM32	Budapest & Godollo	18-19 April 2011
SOM33	Budapest & Godollo	5 June 2011
SOM34	Tokyo	27-28 October 2011
SOM35	Copenhagen	1-2 March 2012
SOM36	Vientiane	12-13 September 2012
SOM on Trade and Investment		
SOMTI1	Brussels	24-25 July 1996
SOMTI2	Tokyo	6 June 1997
SOMTI3	Brussels	5-6 February 1998
SOMTI4	Singapore	12-13 February 1999
SOMTI5	Brussels	7-8 July 1999
SOMTI6	Seoul	12-13 May 2000

SOMTI7	Brussels	4-5 July 2001
SOMTI8	Bali	17 July 2002
SOMTI9	Paris	6 June 2003
SOMTI10	Qingdao	18-19 July 2005
SOMTI11	Maribor	15-16 April 2008
SOMTI12	Brussels (informal)	15-16 February 2011
Finance Deputies Meetings		
FinSOM1	London	5 February 1998
FinSOM2	Vienna	18 December 1999
FinSOM3	Paris	14 September 2000
FinSOM4	Tokyo	15 December 2000
FinSOM5	Bali	7-8 Jun 2003
FinSOM6	Cork	1-2 Mar 2004
FinSOM7	Xian	21-22 April 2005
FinSOM8	Vienna	9-11 March 2006
FinSOM9	Muju	14-15 May 2007
FinSOM10	Jeju Island	15 Jun 2008
FinSOM11	Madrid	19 Jun 2009
FinSOM12	Bangkok	14 October 2012
Customs DG-Commissioner meeting		
Custom DG1	Shenzhen	21 June 1996
Custom DG2	Vienna	20-21 June 1997
Custom DG3	Brussels	23 June 1999
Custom DG4	Stockholm	2 July 2001
Custom DG5	Hanoi	8-9 October 2004
Custom DG6	Peebles	27-29 June 2005
Custom DG7	Yokohama	12-13 November 2007
Custom DG8	Herakleion	15-16 October 2009
Custom DG9	Huan hin	11-12 October 2011
Directors General Meeting on the Management of Migratory Flows		
DGs Migration1	Copenhagen	10-12 March 2003
DGs Migration2	Beijing	12-13 November 2003
DGs Migration3	The Hague	25-26 November 2004
DGs Migration4	Bali	5-7 December 2005
DGs Migration5	Kuopio	11-12 December 2006
DGs Migration6	Seoul	19-20 November 2007
DGs Migration7	Paris	17-18 November 2008
DGs Migration8	Goa	1-2 December 2009
DGs Migration9	Terhulpen	21-23 November 2010
DGs Migration10	Ulan Bator	5-7 September 2011
DGs Migration11	Nicosia	30-31 October 2012
Conference on Counter-terrorism		
Counter-terrorism1	Beijing	22-23 September 2003
Counter-terrorism2	Berlin	18-20 October 2004
Counter-terrorism3	Semarang	14-15 November 2005
Counter-terrorism4	Copenhagen	26-27 June 2006
Counter-terrorism5	Tokyo	15-16 May 2007
Counter-terrorism6	Madrid	3-4 April 2008

Counter-terrorism7	Manila	22-23 June 2009
Counter-terrorism8	Brussels	10-11 June 2010
Other SOMs		
ScienceSOM1	Beijing	November 1998
ScienceSOM2	Brussels	March 1999
Prosecutors' General	Shenzhen	9-12 December 2005
ICT SOM1	Ha Long City	7-9 June 2006
ICT SOM2	Brussels	4-5 December 2007
LabourSOM1	Yogyakarta	11-13 September 2007
LabourSOM2	Geneva	3-4 June 2008
EduSOM1	Bonn	10-11 March 2008
EduSOM2	Hanoi	19-20 January 2009
EduSOM3	Copenhagen	24-25 January 2011
CultureSOM1	Solo	15-17 April 2010
CultureSOM2	Lombok	12-14 July 2011
CultureSOM3	Yogyakarta	17 September 2012

A picture of the hierarchy in the ASEM process is now visible. The summits set the priorities and directions, then, the ministers are mandated to have dialogue and to locate area for more concrete cooperation. The ministers, subsequently, task their senior officials to handle the technical works. The SOMs are the most technical; the senior officials convene also the most frequently. Yet again, none of the agreements reached has legal effect. Positively speaking, convening ministers and senior officials to share views and best practices can produce qualitative added-value: norms and good government practices diffuse beneath. Such diffusion is a long term process and requires continuous interactions between the partners. Therefore, MMs and SOMs which occur on an *ad-hoc* basis are less likely to provide such added-value.

Whilst the national government remain the key unit, other non-state entities are found participating occasionally in the MMs and SOMs, especially in the former. Analysis of the Chairmen's Statements of the past ASEM MMs revealed that meetings of the financial ministers and those of their deputies have frequently included high-level representatives from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European

Central Bank and the Asian Development Bank as guest participants. In the past five meetings among ASEM Cultural Ministers, the Director-General of UNESCO was invited to the second meeting in Paris, whereas the participants' list of the third meeting included 'civil society members'. Representatives from UNESCO's office in Jakarta were invited to the Culture MM5. The fourth EMM invited the Director-General of the WTO as guest of Chair. The second Environment MMs had the Executive Director of the UN Environment Program as guest, whereas the Secretary General of the International Transport Forum was invited to the first ASEM Transport MM. Furthermore, representatives of the World Customs Organisation have been frequent guests at the ASEM Customs Director-Generals/Commissioner Meeting, while the conferences on counter-terrorism have always included organisations like Interpol, the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee and the UN Office of Drugs and Crime. On the other hand, the FMMs and a few *ad-hoc* MMs are limited only to officials from ASEM partners' governments.

Apart from certain international organisations, the business community has been invited to several of the economic related MMs and SOMs to report either on the preparation or the results of the Asia Europe Business Forum to ASEM economic/financial officials. During the London Summit, senior business representatives were invited to a direct dialogue session with ASEM Heads of State/Government. Besides, a group of senior business representatives were invited to have breakfast with the leaders during the Brussels summit. Other than these, direct interactions between the governments and the business community, the so-called government-to-business relations, are still limited in ASEM Track 1.

Some hosts of the MMs or SOMs have invited local academic or experts in relevant fields to give presentations. For example, Japan invited a professor from University of Tokyo to speak about the application of high technologies to counter terrorism in the seventh ASEM Customs Director-General/Commissioner Meeting held in Yokohama in 2007. In the same occasion, the Vice President of Nissan Motor was also invited to give Nissan's view on global supply chain management and the need for international customs standards. In the recent CultureMM, Indonesia (the host) invited nine scholars/experts from various local institutes to share their expertise on the management of heritage cities.

Occasionally, ASEM Heads of State/Government gather 'eminent persons' from their countries to form consultative groups on special topics. Examples include the call for the formation of Asia-Europe Vision Group by ASEM2 to explore institutional improvements for ASEM, and ASEM Task Force for Closer Economic Partnership established by ASEM4. These eminent persons are usually former senior government officials or research and academic experts. This forms an additional platform for public intellectuals to play a role in the relation among ASEM partners. They are asked to draft suggestions on special topics or issues. Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that recommendations submitted by the eminent persons groups have seldom been materialised. No substantial implementation could be seen thus far,⁴³³ hence, the actual consultative role of the eminent persons is questionable.

Differ from the summits, ASEM MMs and SOMs are more open for non-state actors, ranging from international organisations to business community representatives, civil

⁴³³ Asia-Europe Vision Group, *For a Better Tomorrow: Asia-Europe Partnership in the 21st Century*, (1999), i.

society organisations to academics. Yet, the participation of the non-state actors in ASEM Track 1 remains passive; they have to wait for invitation from the host government. In addition, their involvement depends on sectoral demands. This analysis shows that ASEM official meetings in economic field tend to include more international organisations, while those in political field are the least open for non-state actors.

6.4. Initiatives

Apart from exchanging information and views, ASEM partners endorse initiatives for further joint actions during the summits, MMs as well as SOMs. Initiatives are proposed and filtered first by the senior officials, then by the ministers. An initiative has to be accepted by all ASEM partners in consensus. Originally, only the summits and MMs could adopt initiatives. In ASEM5, the SOMs were empowered to endorse initiatives so as to increase the efficiency of the process (as summits and most MMs only take place every two years). Still, the majority of initiatives are adopted in the summits.

Prior to ASEM6, South Korea volunteered to review and evaluate the past initiatives, it then produced the *List of ASEM Initiatives and Overview Report on ASEM Initiatives*.⁴³⁴ It was an attempt to record the initiatives proposed, the follow-ups of the initiatives, the initiators and sponsors. This report also tried to identify the active contributors and the initiatives which were duplicated. However, it is found that some initiatives which were listed in other ASEM official documents were missing in this Korean report. For example, the study of integrating a trans-Asian railway network

⁴³⁴ ASEM6 official website (accessed 10 November 2008) <www.asem6.fi/NEWS_AND_DOCUMENTS/EN_GB/NEWS_DOCUMENTS/INDEX.HTM>.

from ASEM1, the cooperation on environmental disaster preparedness from ASEM2, and the establishment of an *ad hoc*, informal consultative mechanism to confer expeditiously on significant international events from ASEM4 were not listed in the report.

On the other hand, certain proposals listed in the Korean report were not recorded in any summit or MM Chairmen's Statements, such as the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership, the ASEM informal Seminar on Human Rights, and the Meeting of Environment Officials and Technology Transfer Centres in 1998 in Dusseldorf. Moreover, the Korea report only covered the period prior to ASEM6, leaving an information vacuum concerning initiatives after ASEM6. Therefore, this study uses the report prepared by the Korean government as a lead reference and extends the list of initiatives until ASEM9.

Table 6.6 summarises the initiatives from the available official documents of respective ASEM summits (Chairmen's Statements and special declaration/statements). One hundred and eight initiatives were endorsed by ASEM leaders in the past nine summits. This research also explores whether these initiatives have been followed up. It was found out that in average over 80% of them were carried out (this number is counted until ASEM8). Additionally, there are twenty-five proposals noted by the summiteers for further consideration, that is, they were not officially endorsed during the summits. Many of them were materialised eventually.

Table 6.6: Initiatives endorsed during ASEM summits

	Initiatives	Initiator(s)	Follo w-up⁴³⁵
ASEMI	1. Foreign Ministers' Meeting	n/a	Yes
	2. Dialogue between ASEM representatives in New York on UN reform	n/a	Yes
	3. Economic Ministers' Meeting	Japan	Yes
	4. Informal meeting of senior officials on promotion of Asia-Europe economic cooperation and WTO issues	n/a	Yes
	5. Investment Promotion Action Plan	Thailand	Yes
	6. Asia-Europe Business Forum	France, Thailand	Yes
	7. Study on the economic synergy between Asia and Europe	Japan	Yes
	8. Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Centre	Thailand	Yes
	9. Study of integrating a trans-Asian railway network	Malaysia	Yes
	10. Asia-Europe Foundation	Singapore, France	Yes
	11. Asia-Europe University Program for students and scholars exchange	Malaysia, Singapore	Yes
	12. Seminars and symposia for intellectual exchanges	Japan	Yes
	13. Youth exchange program of mini 'Davos-type'	Austria, Japan	Yes
ASEM2	1. Cooperation in combating illicit drugs	UK	No
	2. Asia-Europe SME conference	Italy	Yes
	3. ASEMconnect electronic resource network for SMEs	Singapore	Yes
	4. ASEM Trust Fund	UK	Yes
	5. European Financial Expertise Network	European Commission	Yes
	6. To strengthen cooperation on environmental issues, especially on fresh water, forestry, climate change and sustainable development	n/a	No
	7. To work in cooperation on environmental disaster preparedness	UK	No
	8. A meeting of experts on practical cooperation on child welfare issues	The Philippines, UK	Yes
	9. To enhance and expand educational links	UK	Yes
	10. Asia-Europe Vision Group to develop a medium to long term vision	S.Korea	Yes
ASEM3	1. Roundtable on globalization	S.Korea, Sweden	Yes
	2. Symposium on law enforcement organs' cooperation in combating transnational crimes	China, Italy	Yes
	3. Anti-money laundering initiative	Thailand, UK	Yes
	4. Anti-corruption initiative	China, UK	No

⁴³⁵ "No" means no follow-up was undertaken within the period between two summits. "?" means no available information could be found.

	5. Ministerial Conference on cooperation for the Management of Migratory Flows	China, Germany, Spain	Yes
	6. Conference on E-commerce and Logistics	Belgium, Finland, Singapore	Yes
	7. Seminar on Asia-Europe Cooperation in SMEs	Belgium, Thailand	No
	8. WTO Trade Facilitation Conference	European Commission, Malaysia	Yes
	9. Environment Ministers' Meeting	China, Germany	Yes
	10. Science and technology cooperation on forestry conservation and sustainable development	China, Finland	Yes
	11. Initiative to address the Digital Divide	S.Korea, Japan, Singapore	Yes
	12. Seminar on information and telecommunications technology	European Commission, Thailand	Yes
	13. Trans-Eurasia Information Network	European Commission, Singapore, S.Korea	Yes
	14. Initiative to combat trafficking in women and children	The Philippines, Thailand	Yes
	15. Initiative on HIV/AIDS	Malaysia, UK	No
	16. DUO Fellowship Program	France, S.Korea, Singapore	Yes
ASEM4	1. ASEM Seminar on Anti-terrorism	China, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Spain	Yes
	2. An ad hoc informal consultative mechanism to confer expeditiously on significant international events	n/a	Yes
	3. Regular contacts between relevant regional and national agencies of ASEM partners to facilitate cooperation in the common fight against terrorism and transnational organised crime	Singapore	?
	4. Two rounds of consultations on the Doha Development Agenda by WTO experts	European Commission	Yes
	5. ASEM Symposium on multilateral and regional economic relations	Germany, Japan, Singapore	Yes
	6. ASEM High-Level Conference on agricultural cooperation	China	Yes
	7. Workshop on building market systems under globalisation	Germany, Vietnam	Yes
	8. An action-oriented Taskforce to explore ways for closer ASEM economic partnership	Japan, Singapore, Spain	Yes
	9. ASEM Workshop on the Future of Employment and the Quality of Labour	China, Germany, Ireland, Spain	Yes
	10. Asia-Europe Cooperation in promoting awareness in the young generation on the drug problem	China, Thailand, UK	Yes
	11. ASEM meeting on ARTIADE ATHENS 2004 Olympic Games of the Visual Arts	n/a	Yes
	12. Study on connection between the annual European Capitals of Culture and Asian counterparts	n/a	No
	13. ASEM Seminar on Educational Exchange	European Commission,	Yes

		Ireland, Japan, Singapore	
	14. ASEM Conference on cultures and civilisations	China, Singapore, Malaysia, Denmark, France	Yes
	15. ASEM Youth Games	Thailand	Yes
ASEM5	1. Asia-Europe Young Political Leaders Forum	China, Denmark	Yes
	2. Initiative for strengthening cyber security within the ASEM region	S.Korea, Singapore, Portugal, Germany, Poland, the Philippines, China	Yes
	3. ASEM Trade and Investment Exposition	Austria, China, Germany, Thailand	Yes
	4. ASEM Workshop on EU/ASIA S&T cooperation on clean technology	European Commission, Vietnam	Yes
	5. ASEM Cooperation in the applications of ICT in human resource development and capacity building	Vietnam, Sweden, S.Korea, Brunei, Japan, Ireland	Yes
	6. ASEM Cooperation on HIV/AIDS control	Sweden, Vietnam, the Netherlands, the Philippines	Yes
	7. ASEM DUO Fellowship Program Phase II	S.Korea, Singapore, France, Denmark	Yes
	8. Inter-faith Dialogue	Indonesia, UK, European Commission	Yes
	9. ASEM Education and Research Hub for Life Long Learning	Denmark, Sweden, Thailand	Yes
ASEM6 ⁴³⁶	1. Information exchange systems on natural disaster management	n/a	?
	2. Study the possibility of establishing early warning mechanisms	n/a	?
ASEM7	1. Program for Training of Trainers in the Field of Border Management and Security	Romania	No
	2. ASEM Seminar on New Technologies for Demining and Human Security	Italy	Yes
	3. Meeting of Ministers of Interior on Irregular Migration	Romania	Yes
	4. Promoting Asia-Europe Trade Security and Facilitation	China	Yes
	5. ASEM Conference on the Role of Finance in Economic and Rural Development	European Commission	Yes
	6. ASEM Forum on the Green Growth and SMEs	S.Korea	Yes

⁴³⁶ Neither the *Chairman's Statement of ASEM6* nor the two Declarations issued had mentioned any initiative. The two initiatives listed were mentioned in the *Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development* issued during ASEM7.

	7. UN/ASEM UN-SPIDER Expert Meeting: the Contribution of Space-based Solutions to Sustainable Communities	Austria	No
	8. Workshop on the impact of Climate Change on the biodiversity of tropical rainforests	Brunei	Yes
	9. ASEM Eco-City Network	China	Yes
	10. ASEM Seminar on Energy Security and Climate Change	Singapore	Yes
	11. Energy Ministers' Meeting	European Commission	Yes
	12. ASEM Workshop on Sharing Experiences on Preparedness to Response to Global Climate Change and Emerging Diseases	Vietnam	No
	13. ASEM Cooperation on capacity building of disaster relief	China	Yes
	14. Eurasian Land Bridge Seminar	Pakistan	Yes
	15. ASEM Forum on Food Security	Vietnam	Yes
	16. ASEM Culture and Art Festival	China	Yes
	17. ASEM interfaith Cultural Youth Camp Project	Thailand	Yes
	18. Enhancement of ASEM visibility through cultural activities	Vietnam	Yes
ASEM8	1. 9 th ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration	Belgium	Yes
	2. ASEM SMEs Eco Innovation Centre	S.Korea	Yes
	3. ASEM Water Resources Research and Development Centre	China	Yes
	4. Asia-Europe Seminar on Conservation of Timber and Lime Buildings	Malaysia	Yes
	5. ASEM Seminar on Harmonisation of Biofuels Standards and Application to Vehicle Technologies	the Philippines	Yes
	6. ASEM Green Growth Forum	Vietnam	Yes
	7. ASEM Symposium on Sustainable Forest Management to Address Climate Change	China	Yes
	8. UN/ASEM UN-SPIDER Expert Meeting: the Contribution of Space-based Solutions to Sustainable Communities	Austria	Yes
	9. Trans Eurasia Information Network Cooperation Centre	S.Korea	Yes
	10. ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting	Indonesia	Yes
	11. ASEM Symposium on Technical and Vocational Education	China	Yes
	12. ASEM Food Security Conference	Thailand	Yes
	13. ASEM Forum on Social Safety Nets for All	Vietnam	Yes
	14. Transport Development Forum	China	Yes
	15. 2 nd Transportation Ministers' Meeting	China	Yes
	16. ASEM DUO Fellowship Program Third Phase	S.Korea	Yes

ASEM9	1. ASEM workshop ‘Challenges to Biodiversity Conservation in Tropical Ecosystems’	Brunei	Not applicable
	2. ASEM High Level Meeting on Disaster Prevention and Relief Response to Climate Change	Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Pakistan, European Commission, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands	
	3. ASEM Seminar on ‘Water and River Basin Management – A Green Growth Approach’	Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam	
	4. ASEM Symposium on ‘Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: The Need of A Dynamic ASEM’	China, Laos, India, Poland, ASEF	
	5. ASEM Model Project on Promoting Sustainable Forest Management	China	
	6. ASEM Network for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation in Water Resources	China	
	7. ASEM Seminar on nuclear safety	China	
	8. ASEM Workshop to foster Green Business of Small and Medium enterprises	Indonesia	
	9. Disaster Management Conference	the Philippines	
	10. ASEM-initiative of Sustainable Development Dialogue	n/a	

This long list of initiatives is rather impressive, and may help to counter the critique of ASEM being a mere ‘talk-shop’. Nonetheless, a closer examination reveals that a majority of them are *ad hoc* seminars, conferences and workshops (still mainly ‘talking’). Many initiated activities turn out to be simply one-off events and weak in creating added-value to the ASEM process. Overall, four-fifth of these initiatives are one-off gatherings. These ASEM’s symposia and conferences normally end up with a summary or a list of recommendations to submit to the ASEM summits or MMs. Owing to the absence of mechanism to secure these recommendations to reach or to be read by the ASEM leaders within the present ASEM design, the suggestions submitted are rarely turned into actual policies. The same happens to the initiatives in the form of study or research on a given topic. Accordingly, the added-value of

convening experts and academics to the policy-making in ASEM countries is highly questionable.

Qualitatively, these symposia and conferences, which make up the majority of ASEM initiatives, are not totally meaningless. Convening the intellectuals from Asia and Europe can foster people-to-people contacts, especially between individuals who share similar professions or expertise. Individual participants can develop personal ties with each other; though the scale in the ASEM events has remained small (normally ranges from twenty to a hundred). Again, this added-value created by ASEM is long-term instead of immediate.

The list of initiatives reflects ASEM's dual-track approach and multidimensionality. The proportion of activities in Track 1 (involve governments only) and Track 2 (involve non-state actors) are quite balanced. The initiatives cover various policy areas: a third of them are designated to the socio-cultural field, whereas proposals lie in economic field, environmental field and political field each represent around one-fifth of the total number of initiatives. Since ASEM6, the environment has become a key focus. From this list of initiatives, ASEM partners do not seem to be too 'business-oriented', as labelled by some observers.⁴³⁷ Multi-dimensionality can be both an advantage and disadvantage of ASEM. When the boundaries between different policy fields diminish, an economic issue can have a huge environmental impact; similarly a social legislation can bring political impact. The multi-faceted nature allows ASEM to flexibly deal with these multi-sectoral issues. On the other hand, comparing with the G20 which focuses on the international financial crisis and

⁴³⁷ Richards and Kirkpatrick, "Reorienting Inter-regional Co-operation" (1999): 698; Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 75.

the ARF who concentrates on security in Asia, ASEM lacks expertise on any aspect.

The initiatives are replicated sometimes. For instance, there have been several similar initiatives on student and academia exchanges: ASEM2's Asia-Europe University and mini 'Davos-type' youth exchange, ASEM4's Seminar on Education Exchange and the three phases of ASEM DUO Fellowship Programme. Noteworthy, the promotion of intellectual exchanges has already been a main area of ASEF's mandate. Another example is the duplication of the Asia Europe Business Conference (which was a one-off event) and the first AEBF. Unnecessary duplications waste resources and lead to missed opportunities to create added-value. Many ASEM partners and observers have recognised such problem and urged for improvement during the evaluation on ASEM's tenth anniversary.⁴³⁸ Some partners argued that the absence of a central secretariat to record and coordinate the initiatives led to technical difficulty to add up the value of similar initiatives. Subsequently, ASEM6 created an ASEM Virtual Secretariat to facilitate coordination and information sharing among ASEM partners. However, the effectiveness of the Virtual Secretariat was described as minimal by three interviewed key informants.⁴³⁹ Indeed, none of the Chairmen's Statement of ASEM7, ASEM8 or ASEM9 has mentioned this Virtual Secretariat. Instead, new administrative initiatives were created such as the establishment of the ASEM Chairman Support Group (endorsed in FMM10) and of the coordination mechanism 'from summit to summit' (endorsed in ASEM8). The idea of the Virtual Secretariat

⁴³⁸ Korean government, *Overview Report on ASEM initiatives- Evaluation and Recommendations for Future Improvements* (2006), 3.

⁴³⁹ They were Wei Nian from the Technical Support team for the ASEM process set up by the European Commission between 1 January and 31 December 2010, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe who headed the ASEM8 Task Force set up by the Belgian Government and an anonymous senior official from the European Commission with extensive ASEM experience.

seemed to be abandoned.

In addition, the Issue-based leadership mechanism was introduced in ASEM6 (adopted in ASEM7) to better coordinate the initiatives. By ASEM9, the four-year term endorsed in ASEM7 completed. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this mechanism, this research compares the list of Issue-based leadership (Table 5.1 in the previous chapter) to the initiatives adopted and the events taken place from ASEM7 onwards. It is found that a majority of the volunteer ASEM partners had organised ASEM events in their respective ‘leading issues’. Encouragingly, several concrete commitments were resulted: the rotating ASEM Education Secretariat was established to coordinate ASEM educational activities,⁴⁴⁰ ASEM SMEs Eco Innovation Centre (ASEIC) opened in Seoul⁴⁴¹ and ASEM Water Resources Research and Development Centre set up in China.⁴⁴² In addition, the LabourMM4 (October 2012) adopted a list of ‘issue-based leadership’ to implement ‘technical projects’.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰ It was established by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and hosted by the German Academic Exchange Service. Germany is the current host of the Secretariat, while Indonesia offers to host the next term which begins in October 2013. For more information, see <www.asem-education-secretariat.org/en/12183/>.

⁴⁴¹ ASEIC was established in Seoul in June 2011. It aims to promote green growth business opportunities for SMEs. For more information, see <www.aseic.org/main.do>.

⁴⁴² This centre was established in Changsha in August 2011, to research on water resource development and create synergy among interested parties in ASEM to collaborate in water environment governance. For more information, see <www.asemwater.org>.

⁴⁴³ *Chairman’s Statement of LabourMM4*, 2012, paragraph 27. The list are:

Issues	Interested Partners	
	Asian	European
Social Protection	India	the Netherlands
Youth Employment Policies	China	Poland
Health and Safety at Work	Malaysia, S. Korea	France
Skill Development	the Philippines	Finland
Social Dialogue on working conditions	Indonesia	Belgium

Nonetheless, it is found that some other ASEM partners have been taking their own actions regardless of the existence of the Issue-based leadership. For instance, Vietnam organised a forum on food security in July 2010 (co-sponsored by Denmark) while Thailand organised a separate conference on the same topic in May 2011. Being neither leader nor sponsor in International Migration, Romania was found active in proposing and organising events on border management and migration since ASEM7. On the other hand, Japan which had volunteered as leader in Pandemic Control and Climate Change did not contribute to any relevant ASEM events between ASEM7 and ASEM9. Seemingly, not all ASEM partners have taken the Issue-based leadership seriously; its non-binding nature would be one reason. When the first four-year term completes in ASEM9, ASEM partners have not evaluated the mechanism. In fact, there was no mention of the Issue-based leadership in the Chairman's Statement of ASEM9. The aforementioned 'labour-version' issue-based leadership adopted by the LabourMM4 was not addressed either.

It is rather nature that some initiatives would receive more attention, follow-ups and have more information available on them than others. They include namely the creation of ASEF and AEBF, Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP), Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP), ASEM Trust Fund, ASEM Conference on Counter-terrorism, Trans-Eurasia Information Network (TEIN), ASEM DUO Fellowship, ASEM Eco-City Network, as well as the establishment of ASEIC and ASEM Water Resources Research and Development Centre. They illustrate that ASEM partners are able to put together something more substantial and sustainable than *ad-hoc* conferences and symposia.

Taking the TFAP as example, since ASEM2 it has been designated by ASEM partners as a platform to promote, facilitate and liberalise trade between ASEM member states, especially by reducing non-tariff barriers. Under the TFAP, officials from ASEM partner governments gathered as different working groups, not regularly though. These meetings are expected to foster the exchange of views and information, which are collected and then turned into lists of common priority and best practice. ASEM partners are encouraged to reduce non-tariffs barriers and increase transparency to promote trade on the prioritised areas. Every two year, they agree on a list of concrete deliverables to form a two-year programme, which are then submitted to the EMM, now to the FinMM due to the suspension of EMM, or summit for approval. Each partner is responsible for the implementation back in their home country and has to report their progress to the SOMTI and the co-facilitators (a volunteer ASEM partner) annually. SOMTI and the co-facilitators summarise the reports collected and present a list of achievements to all ASEM partners as well as the business community via the AEBF.

Nonetheless, TFAP as well as its sibling IPAP are not negotiation fora or legal binding arrangements. ASEM partners voluntarily decide whether, how and when to undertake concrete actions. According to the reports published, the follow-ups on TFAP vary greatly among the ASEM partners. In fact, these evaluation reports are more like a summary of the most updated trade or investment-related policies imposed by the ASEM partners. There has been no assessment of the impacts of the action plans on the trade and investment flows between ASEM partners. There has been no attempt to check how many inter-regional business connections were established; how many non-tariff barriers were eliminated; or how useful or popular

are the two web-pages under the IPAP.⁴⁴⁴ There has been no academic research on these issues either. Understandably, the co-existence of many factors (including the APEC's TFAP, bilateral trade deals and different financial crises) which can affect the economic relations between ASEM countries makes it difficult to assess the impact of ASEM's TFAP and IPAP.

Moving to the social-cultural pillar, TEIN and ASEM DUO Fellowship are two examples of more developed ASEM initiatives. While the former aims at facilitating research and virtual teaching cooperation between institutions from Asia and Europe, the later aims to facilitate the exchange of students and scholars of tertiary education institutions between the two continents. So far, four other ASEM partners (Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Thailand) have joined France, Korea and Singapore to be contributors to the ASEM DUO Fellowship. Students and scholars from selected institutions in the contributing countries are paired up with 'fellows' from institutions of the other continent. The number of pairs awarded by each contributing country varies. A Secretariat for this initiative was set up in October 2001 in Seoul as a focal contact point and depository for information. A special website (www.asemduo.org) has been set up to attract and facilitate the applicants.

TEIN has entered into its fourth phase in after ASEM8. From the first phase (began in December 2001), TEIN has bridged 8000 research and educational institutions across Asia and Europe.⁴⁴⁵ The high-capacity internet connection infrastructure facilitates cooperation among the research and educational institutions. The direct connectivity

⁴⁴⁴ Virtual Information Exchange <www.asem.vie.net>, which was replaced later by ASEM Invest Online <www.europa.eu.int/aio>, and ASEMConnect <asemconnectvietnam.gov.vn>.

⁴⁴⁵ TEIN3 official website, <www.tein3.net/?PHPSESSID=2f60947213a1fb9c2baf5f9fce39fc74> (accessed 17 May 2011).

created is expected to eventually contribute to the inter-regional economic growth and understanding. In 2011, the TEIN Cooperation Centre was established by the Korean government as a non-profit foundation corporation to manage TEIN4. Notably, the coverage of TEIN overlaps partially with but not equals to ASEM membership. Some of the countries involved are not ASEM partners, while some of the ASEM partners are not covered. TEIN3 and TEIN4 membership, which remains the same, covers Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Three out of these eighteen countries are non-ASEM members.

Concerning the initiatives adopted in the past MMs and SOMs, the records have been patchy. As mentioned above, many of the after-meeting records of the SOMs are not available to the public. Hence, it is especially difficult to construct a complete list of initiatives adopted in the SOMs. From the official documents available, at least eighty-four initiatives were endorsed by the MMs (Table 6.7), and at least ten were adopted by the SOMs⁴⁴⁶ (Table 6.8).

Table 6.6: Initiatives endorsed during ASEM MMs

MMs	Initiatives
FinMM1	1. ASEM Discussion on the Euro and Its Implication on Global and Asian Financial Market
	2. ASEM Cooperation In Fighting Money Laundering
	3. Cooperation in Financial Supervision and Regulation
	4. Meetings of ASEM Finance Deputies to discuss international financial issues raised in other international monetary and financial fora
	5. work program of ASEM Customs Directors General and Commissioners
	6. A Computerised Communication Network among ASEM Finance Ministries

⁴⁴⁶ Source of information: official documents issued by the SOMs which took place after ASEM5.

EMM1	1. Trade Facilitation Action Plan
FinMM2	1. A list of priorities for each ASEM country requiring assistance in strengthening financial systems
FMM2	1. Role of State & Market: roles of public authorities and private actors in promotion of economic and social progress conference
	2. ASEM Expert Meeting on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage
	3. ASEM Education Hubs
	4. Seminar on Combination of Traditional and Modern Medicine for Public Health Care
	5. Seminar on Labour Relations
S&TMM	1. An informal meeting of Science and Technology Ministers on 'Science and Society'
FMM3	1. Kobe Research Project
	2. ASEM Public Debt Management Forum
	3. Lifelong Learning
	4. Seminar on Asia-Europe Cooperation on the Applications of Information Technology to Human Resources Development in the Mekong Sub-region
	5. ASEM SOM Information Exchange, Monitoring and Review Mechanism for ASEM Initiatives and Activities
MigrantMM	1. Network of contact points for coordination and preparation of meetings at expert level between partners and future ASEM meetings at Director-General level of Immigration services
	2. Study of the possibility of establishing a network of Immigration and Consular Liaison Officers
FMM4	1. Meeting between Directors-General of migration, establishment of a network of migration contact points would facilitate the preparation
	2. ASEM seminar on Water Resources Management
FinMM4	1. Symposium on combating underground banking and the need of supervising alternate remittance services in European and Asian countries
EMM4	1. Review of priorities and activities carried out under ASEM Economic pillar
	2. Two rounds of consultations in DDA, one in autumn in Asia and one in Europe back to back with SOMTI
	3. ASEM Symposium on multilateral and regional economic relations in spring in 2003
	4. ASEM high level conference on agricultural cooperation, with a preparation expert meeting
	5. A further stocktaking in the last quarter in 2003, after the Cancun ministerial
FinMM5	1. The Bali Initiative
FMM5	1. <i>Ad-hoc</i> consultations amongst ASEM Permanent Representatives to the UN on special issues
	2. ASEM Seminar on the Management of Public Health Emergency
	3. Management Strategy for ASEM's long term Financial Sustainability

	4. Study ASEM information Board Phase II
	5. ASEM logo
FMM6	1. ASEM Symposium on an Iron-Silk Road
	2. ASEM Workshop on Urban Forestry
FMM7	1. ASEM Oceans Initiative
	2. ASEM Workshop on community-level actions for global environmental agenda
	3. ASEM Prosecutors-General Conference
	4. ASEM Workshop on strengthening human resources through vocational education and training
	5. ASEM Diplomatic Academies Network
	6. A review on the 10 years of ASEM
CultureMM2	1. Action Plan of Culture Ministers
FinMM6	1. The Tianjin Initiative
High-level Economic Officials' Meeting	1. ASEM Seminar on Energy
	2. ASEM Forum and Exposition on Tourist Investment and Cooperation
LabourMM1	1. ASEM Labour and Social Affairs Ministers' meeting
FinMM8	1. ASEM Meeting of Transport Ministers
	2. The Jeju Initiative to enhance the mutual cooperation on PPP among ASEM member countries
EduMM1	1. ASEM University-Business-Forum
HighEduMM	1. ASEM Dialogue on credits, learning outcomes, quality assurance and qualification
	2. Meetings for Quality Assurance Agencies in Asia and Europe
	3. Conferences on lifelong learning
	4. Link between the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training and Asian initiatives on QA in VET
	5. Workshop on attractiveness and employability in Vocational Education and Training
	6. An EU-Asia portal providing information on jobs and learning opportunities in ASEM
	7. Biennial Asia-Europe Rectors' Conference
	8. A rotating ASEM Education Secretariat of four-year cycle to coordinate the ASEM Education Process
FMM9	1. ASEM Seminar on the Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights
	2. ASEM Conference on the Role of Finance in Economic and Rural Development
	3. ASEM Conference on Harmonisation of Competency Standards
	4. Asia-Europe Economic Cooperation and Development Forum
	5. ASEM Conference on the Sustainability of the Asian Growth Model
	6. ASEM Forum on Climate Change and Adaptation Measures
	7. ASEM Workshop for Empowering Local Community in the Use of ICT

	8. Asia-Europe Forum on ICT Research and Development Cooperation
	9. ASEM Interfaith and Intercultural Retreat for Religious Leaders
	10. ASEM Seminar on Metropolitan Management
FinMM9	1. 2nd ASEM Development Conference
	2. ASEM Public Conference on EU-Asia Strategic Relations
	3. Employment Ministers' Meeting
CultureMM5	1. Establishment of an experts' network on sustainable city management
	2. Establishment of Asia Europe creative city network
	3. Sharing experiences in heritage emergency response
EduMM3	1. Establishment of an ASEM pilot group of experts to explore the feasibility of setting up an ASEM convention on mutual recognition of degrees and study achievements
	2. Turn ASEM University-Business Forum into an annual event and link it to EU University-Business Forum
	3. Conference on qualifications framework
	4. An expert meeting on e-learning as a component of lifelong learning
FMM10	1. ASEM/ASEF Meeting on the Role of Space-based Information for Disaster Preparedness and Recovery in East and Southeast Asia: Lessons to Learn from the Recent Disasters
	2. Conference on Enhancement of Balanced Mobility between Asia and Europe
	3. ASEM Forum on Trade and Investment in Marine Fisheries
	4. ASEM Education Seminar on Quality Enhancement in Higher Education
TransportMM2	1. Action plan on Facilitation of Movement of Goods and People between Asia and Europe

Table 6.8: Examples of initiatives endorsed during ASEM SOMs

SOMs	Initiatives
SOMTI10	1. Seminar on Tourism
	2. Forum on Tourism
	3. Seminar on Energy
SOMTI11	1. ASEM Business Summit on Trade in Services
DGCustom6	1. Seoul Initiative Action Plan on simplifying customs procedures and on strengthening customs cooperation in East Asia
DGCustom7	1. Trade Facilitation Action Plan for 2006-2008
	2. Enforcement Working Group Enforcement Action Plan for 2007-2009
DGCustom8	1. ASEM Customs-Trade-Day
	2. Prepare a paper with an overview of 'good practices' of customs IPR enforcement
	3. Prepare a paper on 'good practices' and the role of customs in enforcing environmental law
	4. Prepare a paper on 'good practices' for setting up a dialogue with traders for consultation and information sharing

In sum, the political will of the partners determines the advancement of ASEM cooperation. While certain ASEM partners have been very active in proposing and organising ASEM events, some partners have been invisible in the sponsors' lists. The difference in degree of commitment among the ASEM partners is explored in more details below. While the majority of the initiatives are one-off symposia and conferences, ASEM partners have demonstrated ability and willingness to establish more concrete and long-term cooperative projects namely TFAP, IPAP and TEIN. The number of tangible and long-term initiatives can serve as an indicator of the commitment of ASEM partners to the inter-regional relationship.

6.5. Regional organisations in ASEM Track 1

As already mentioned, although the European Commission and the President of the Council of the EU sit at the ASEM discussion table, they do not speak for the EU member states. Each EU member state has individual seat and act for itself in the ASEM process. The few exceptional cases, in which the Commission served as a broker and regional coordinator who presented a common EU interest, have been WTO-related issues and the discussions on international trade liberalisation.⁴⁴⁷

Since ASEM7, ASEAN Secretariat has had its own seat in ASEM. Similar to the European Commission's case, ASEAN Secretariat does not speak for ASEAN member states in ASEM. Different from the European Commission, ASEAN Secretariat is excluded from the coordinator system. Its member states take turn as one of the two Asian rotating coordinators. The reality has not been matching the expectation of Soesastro and Wanandi that ASEAN would play a 'core role beyond

⁴⁴⁷ Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations" (2001): 36-7.

Southeast Asia in fora like ASEM and APEC.’⁴⁴⁸ It is indeed the few core ASEAN member states (namely Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) who have played eminent role in the ASEM process. As Dent highlighted, ‘ASEAN member states were keen to present their own distinct ideas on ASEM.’⁴⁴⁹ The outspoken former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir confirmed such view in 1998 in saying ‘it [ASEM] was not an ASEAN-Europe meeting’ and ‘Malaysia will attend the upcoming ASEM in London as an individual participant and not as a member of a bloc.’⁴⁵⁰

Involvement of the two regional institutions triggers confusion. While each EU member state has its own seat and delegation in ASEM, who does the European Commission represent? The same question applies to the Asian side after ASEAN Secretariat was admitted as an individual member. The ASEAN case is even more problematic because half of the Asian ASEM partners are not member of ASEAN. After the accession of Norway and Switzerland to the European side of ASEM, the same problem also applies to the representation of the EU.

Interestingly, the founding partners and other participants of the ASEM process do not seem to concern much about the double representation of certain partner countries. One key reason could be the informality of ASEM. As no legally-binding decisions are made, ASEM partners do not have to calculate the weight or vote distribution as they do in multilateral institutions like the UN General Assembly. Subsequently,

⁴⁴⁸ Soesastro and Wanandi, “Towards an Asia-Europe partnership: A perspective from Asia” (1997): 21-22.

⁴⁴⁹ Dent, “ASEM and the ‘Cinderella Complex’ of EU-East Asia Economic Relations” (2001): 37.

⁴⁵⁰ “Mahathir to attend Asem meeting as ‘individual participant’”, *Strait Times*, 12 March 1998.

ASEM can serve as a testing ground for the co-existence of a regional organisation and its constituent members both as individual participants in one international forum.

Thus far, in ASEM's Track 1, the ASEAN Secretariat has not done much except attending the meetings. In contrast, active participation of the European Commission as an independent ASEM partner provides this research with substances for the study of the co-existence of a regional institution and its component states in a multilateral institution. Until ASEM9, the Commission took part in ASEM just as another active partner. It hosted numerous MMs and SOMs; it proposed, funded and implemented initiatives; its involvement covered all three ASEM pillars. Moreover, the Commission's membership has never been distinguished from other partners', although it was the sole non-state partner when the process inaugurated. Practically, the European Commission's membership has not been different from that of any ASEM country, while its legitimacy and representation did not seem matter too much to other ASEM partners.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the EU's Lisbon Treaty is expected to bring some changes to the Union's representation in ASEM. In ASEM8, the permanent Presidency of the EU Council was added alongside the European Commission and the rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The President of the EU Council, van Rumpuy. The newly formed European External Action Service (EEAS) took the role of the Directorate-General for External Relations of the European Commission to represent the Commission in the FMM. Yet, until ASEM9, these changes did not appear to boost the coherence of European side much. Meanwhile, the entry of two non-EU countries to the European side may counter-balance the post-Lisbon measures.

Apart from the independent membership granted to the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat, the special roles of the EU and ASEAN in the ASEM process are also affirmed by the attention given to their respective developments. Time is given for updates of the respective integration progress in the two organisations in every ASEM summit, including the introduction of the Euro in 2002, development of the EU's common foreign policy, the attempt of ASEAN to build an ASEAN Community, the signing and come-into-force of the ASEAN Charter as well as enlargements of the two organisations. In addition, two other regional groupings on the Asia side are mentioned repeatedly in the summits: ASEAN+3 and the ARF. ASEAN's driver role in the establishment of these two regional groupings in East Asian regional integration has been acknowledged repeatedly.

Noteworthy, the actions of these regional organisations and groups are limited to regional contexts, except that of the EU. The Union's involvement in East Asia was mentioned seven times throughout the nine summits' Chairmen's Statements, namely EU's participation in the Aceh Monitoring Mission, the EU-ASEAN Political Dialogue and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation between the two regional organisations. Remarkably, the global *actorness* of the EU was evaluated higher than that of the Asian regional groups. This was further confirmed when its involvement at international level was mentioned. The EU's external involvements in various parts of the world were reported: the Middle-East (the Iranian nuclear crisis, war between Israel and the Hezbollah and war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006),⁴⁵¹ Southeast Asia (the Aceh Monitoring Mission),⁴⁵² the UN (resource-funding for the United

⁴⁵¹ *Chairman's Statement of ASEM6*, 2006, paragraph 8, 10; *Chairman's Statement of ASEM9*, 2012, paragraph 50.

⁴⁵² *Chairman's Statement of ASEM6*, 2006, paragraph 3.

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change between 2010 and 2012).⁴⁵³ In contrast, the most developed Asian regional organisation, ASEAN, was not featured to have acted outside Southeast Asia.

6.6. International organisations in Track 1

Certain international organisations are also found involved in ASEM's Track 1. As mentioned above, they were invited to some MMs and SOMs. Moreover, their role in the international arena has been underscored in many ASEM official documents. The first intensive presence of an international organisation was in ASEM2's Financial Statement, which was issued in response to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997/8. The *actorness* and role of two multilateral financial institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, in managing global financial order were highlighted. Similarly, the significance of the international financial institutions was stressed in ASEM8's Brussels Declaration on more Effective Global Economic Governance.

The special agencies of the UN have been frequent guests in ASEM MMs. The UN and its agencies like the International Atomic Energy Agency and Food and Agriculture Organisation are mentioned when transnational problems arose, for example, the fight against terrorism with UN in lead; threats related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons; and concerns on food security. In the past summit Chairmen's Statements, ASEM leaders highly commented on the UN's role in dealing with unstable states like Afghanistan, East Timor, Myanmar and Iran. Moreover, ASEM leaders affirmed the significance of the UN and its special agencies in promoting multilateral cooperation.

⁴⁵³ *Chairman's Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 34.

The international organisations are mainly brought up when crises arise, reflecting the problem-solving role of these organisations in the mind of ASEM partners. Multilateral organisations such as the UN and the WTO are often referred to as platforms, mechanisms or fora for nation-states (which overlap with the ASEM membership) to interact, instead of acting on their own. Half of the time when the UN is featured, its dependence on the member states to implement its Charter, conventions and resolutions is underlined. Instead of imposing their rules and decisions on the members, the international organisations are depicted to be subordinate to the constituent nation-states.

There were several attempts by the ASEM partners to pre-coordinate their position before a WTO or UN multilateral meeting. For instance, in ASEM1 the Heads of State/Government talked about the first WTO Ministerial Conference (held in December 1996, Singapore); in ASEM3 leaders discussed the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (held in 2001); and in ASEM4 the Heads of State/Government talked over the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun (held in 2003). However, when assessing the results of these pre-coordination attempts, Dent concluded that ASEM has failed to reach its ‘multilateral utility’.⁴⁵⁴ This doctoral research agrees with Dent’s conclusion and proposes the informality and non-legal binding nature of the process as two reasons, as they make obligatory actions of ASEM partners in the multilateral fora impossible.

A picture of how ASEM partners envision the correlation between ASEM and other multilateral institutions emerges. They do not seek to alter the US-Europe built liberal international order established after the Second World War via ASEM. Instead, the

⁴⁵⁴ See p.69 in Chapter Two.

partners put ASEM within the WTO framework in trade affairs and within the UN framework in political and other affairs. The overlapping membership is important: ASEM partners are also members of these international organisations. Consequently, the UN and WTO-related issues become part of the common concerns of the ASEM partners. Regulations and agreements from international organisations are often adopted as guidance for actions among ASEM partners. ASEM partners have not isolated the ASEM process from the wider international arena or taken action outside the framework of the UN or the WTO. Besides, the international organisations are assigned the problem-solving role in managing international problems, while ASEM is not. Nevertheless, the *actorness* of these international actors is found fluctuating. They are seen as individual entity acting on their own only occasionally. Mostly, it is the member states of the international organisations who take the real actions.

6.7. Non-state actors in Track 1

Shifting to the non-state actors, examination of ASEM Track 1 revealed that the ‘business community’ is the most heavy-weighted private actor. ASEM official documents underscored numerous times the crucial role of the business community in the ASEM process.⁴⁵⁵ A special initiative, Asia Europe Business Forum, has been proposed and adopted in the inaugural summit to foster inter-regional business-to-business and government-to-business relations. The AEBF is then regarded as ‘important in shaping the agenda and improving interaction with the business sector through consultation.’⁴⁵⁶ No similar recognition or official channel for

⁴⁵⁵ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM2*, 1998, paragraph 13; *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 16; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM6*, 2006, paragraph 21.

⁴⁵⁶ *Helsinki Declaration Annex*, 2006, part III.

communication is available to other types of non-state actors. However, the involvement of non-state actors on ASEM's Track 1 remains limited. Their participations in the process concentrate in Track 2, which are explored in details in Chapter 8.

6.8. Variation of commitment of different ASEM member states

The above sections illustrate the dominance of nation-state as primary actor in ASEM's Track 1. However, the commitments of the forty-nine member states vary. This section explores the degree of engagement of the individual nation-states, as well as that of the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat in ASEM's Track 1. ASEM partners' presence in the meetings and contribution of resources are examined so as to distinguish the active and indifferent partners.

First, looking at the attendance in the ASEM meetings, absenteeism has been endemic on the European side, which has already irritated some of the Asian partners who always send representatives at the highest level to the ASEM meetings. FMM6 particularly highlighted that attendance to ASEM would reflect the degree of commitment of the partners to ASEM cooperation.⁴⁵⁷ A report published by University of Helsinki reviewed that absentee rates were the worst in ASEM5 in ASEM's first decade.⁴⁵⁸ Fifteen out of the then twenty-five member states of the EU did not send their Heads of state to ASEM5 in Hanoi, albeit the preparation FMM for ASEM5 reiterated the

⁴⁵⁷ *Chairman's Statement of the sixth Foreign Ministers' Meetings*, 2004, 8.

⁴⁵⁸ University of Helsinki, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward: An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities* (2006), 168.

importance of full attendance to the summit.⁴⁵⁹

Thus far, only the first, seventh, eighth and ninth summit hosts published the official attendance lists. This research reconstructs a complete list of attendees by exploring other sources of information. With the help of online news archive FACTIVE, news about previous ASEM summits was traced. News items which mentioned the participation or absentee of the ASEM leaders as well as news with pictures of the summit participants were collected and analysed. Table 6.9 summarised the attendance of ASEM Heads of State/Government (‘×’ refers to absence).

Table 6.9: Attendance list of Head of State/Government in ASEM summits

	Summits	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	
European side	European Commission										
	Austria		×							×	
	Belgium			×		×				×	
	Denmark	×				×					
	Finland										
	France										
	Germany				×					×	
	Greece	×		×		×		×		×	
	Ireland									×	
	Italy					×			×		
	Luxembourg										
	The Netherlands					×				×	
	Portugal					×		×		×	
	Spain	×				×				×	
	Sweden	×					×		×	×	
	UK				×	×	×	×	×	×	
	Cyprus						×			×	×
	Czech Republic						×		×		
	Estonia										
	Hungary						×	×	×		×
Latvia										×	
Lithuania						×		×		×	
Malta						×			×	×	
Poland											
Slovakia						×		×	×	×	

⁴⁵⁹ *Chairman’s Statement of the sixth Foreign Ministers’ Meetings, 2004, 8.*

Overall, the most disinterested partners among ASEM founding partners on the European side are the UK and Greece, while Hungary and Slovakia demonstrated the least interest among the non-founding European partners. The case of the UK is noteworthy, from ASEM4 onward, it diminished the interest in ASEM, contrary to its enthusiasm in earlier years (it hosted many official meetings as well as proposed and funded a number of ASEM initiatives). One possible reason behind this change could be UK government's opposition against the accession of Myanmar to ASEM. The need to discuss the accession of Myanmar (together with two other new members to ASEAN and ten new members to the EU) first arose in ASEM3,⁴⁶⁰ the last ASEM summit which was attended by a British prime minister.

It is unfair to say that the Europeans are the only absentees. On the Asian side, Indonesia and the Philippines have sent delegations led by ministers to several ASEM summits. Similar to the Greek case, Indonesia showed indifference to summits which took place in Europe. Discouragingly, in ASEM8 two out of the three newly admitted members (New Zealand and Russia) chose not to send their heads to Brussels. New Zealand was again represented only by the Foreign Minister in ASEM9. This led to doubt about whether it is really interested in the process.

On the other hand, there are partners who persist in sending their Heads of State/Government to every ASEM summits. Among the founding members, there are ten such partners: the European Commission, Finland, France, Luxembourg, China, Japan, South Korea, Brunei, Malaysia and Thailand. Regarding the partners who

⁴⁶⁰ Yong-bae Shin, "ASEM to adopt declaration on Korean peace-Senior officials reach agreement", *Korea Herald*, 21 September 2000; James Strohmaier, "Future of Asia-Europe relations", *Korea Herald*, 19 October 2000; Gao Anming, "Europe, Asia To Build Stronger Ties", *China Daily*, 23 October 2000.

accessed in 2004, Estonia, Poland, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar have sent their highest possible representatives to all ASEM summits they attended. For the partners who joined in the second round of enlargement, Bulgaria, Mongolia and the ASEAN Secretariat have always sent their heads. For the six new members from the two latest rounds of enlargement, it is rather too early to conclude their degree of commitment to ASEM (though the disinterest of New Zealand is already rather obvious). Apart from the attendance, this research examines the contribution made to ASEM by individual ASEM partners in terms of proposing and hosting ASEM activities (Tables 6.10 and 6.11).

Table 6.10: ASEM partners' contribution to host ASEM official meetings from ASEM1 to ASEM9

		Sum -mit	MMs	SOMs	Issue-based leadership/ (agreed in LabourMM4)
European	European Commission		EnergyMM1	SOM29, SOM30, SOMT11, SOMT13, SOMT15, SOMT17, SOMT112, S&TSOM2, CustomDGM3, ICTSOM2	
	Austria		FinMM7	SOM16, FinSOM3, FinSOM8, Custom DG2	
	Belgium	8 th		MigrationDGM9, TerrorismSOM8	(Social Dialogue on working conditions)
	Denmark	4 th	FinMM4, EMM4, EnvirMM3, EduMM3	SOM31, DGs Migration1, TerrorismSOM4, SOM35	Climate Change, Life Long Learning
	Finland	6 th		SOM6, SOM18, MigrationDGM5	(Skill Development)
	France		CultureMM2	SOMT19, FinSOM2, MigrationDGM7	(Health and Safety at Work)
	Germany		FinMM2, FMM2, EMM2, LabourMM1,	SOM19, TerrorismSOM2	Development of SMEs, Education/

			FMM8, EduMM1		Human Resources, Labour/ Employment
	Greece			Custom DG8	
	Ireland		FMM6	SOM2, SOM11, FinSOM6	
	Italy	9 th	EnvMM2		
	Luxembourg			SOM3	
	the Netherlands		(EMM6), LabourMM3	MigrationDGM3	(Social Protection)
	Portugal			SOM7	
	Spain		MigrantMM1, FinMM9	SOM1, SOM10, SOM27, FinSOM11, TerrorismSOM6	Interfaith and Counter-Terroris m, Finance
	Sweden			SOM9, SOM17, Custom DG4	
	UK	2 nd		SOM4, SOM15, FinSOM1, Custom DG6	Pandemic Control
	Cyprus			MigrationDGM11	
	Czech Republic			SOM25	
	Estonia				
	Hungary		FMM10	SOM32, SOM33	
	Latvia				
	Lithuania		TransportMM1		Transportation
	Malta				
	Poland		CulMM4		Climate Change, (Youth Employment Policies)
	Slovakia				
	Slovenia			SOM21, SOMTI11	
	Bulgaria				
	Romania				
	Norway				
	Switzerland				
Asian	China	7 th	Sci&TechMM1, FMM3, EnvMM1, EMM5, CulMM1, FinMM6, SMEMM1, TransportMM2	SOM20, SOM22, SOM23, SOMTI10, FinSOM7, Custom DG1, MigrationDGM2, TerrorismSOM1, S&TSOM1, ProsecutorsSOM	Development of SMEs, Culture/ Tourism, Pandemic Control, Transportation, (Youth Employment Policies)
	Japan		EMM1,	SOM14, SOMTI2,	Pandemic

		FinMM3, FMM7	FinSOM4, Custom DG7, TerrorismSOM5	Control, Climate Change
South Korea	3 rd	FinMM8	SOM8, SOMTI6, FinSOM9, FinSOM10, MigrationDGM6	Development of SMEs, Inter-cultural Dialogue, (Health and Safety at Work)
Brunei				
Indonesia		FinMM5, FMM5, LabourMM2, CultureMM5	SOM13, SOMTI8, FinSOM5, MigrationDGM4, TerrorismSOM3, LabourSOM1, CultureSOM2, CultureSOM3	Interfaith and Counter-Terroris m, (Social Dialogue on working conditions)
Malaysia		CulMM3		(Health and Safety at Work)
The Philippines			TerrorismSOM7	Interfaith and Counter-Terroris m, Energy Security/ Energy Efficiency, International Migration, (Skill Development)
Singapore		FMM1	SOMTI4	Energy Security/ Energy Efficiency
Thailand	1 st	FinMM1, FinMM10	SOM5, Custom DG9, FinSOM12	Culture/Tourism , Food Security
Vietnam	5 th	EMM3, ICTMM1, EduMM2, FMM9, LabourMM4	SOM12, SOM24, SOM26, Custom DG5, ICTSOM1	Culture/Tourism , Education/Huma n Resources, Pandemic Control
Cambodia			SOM28	
Laos	9 th		SOM36	
Myanmar				
India			MigrationDGM8	(Social Protection)
Mongolia		EnvMM4	MigrationDGM10	
Pakistan				
Australia				
New Zealand				
Russia				
Bangladesh				

Table 6.11: ASEM partners whose initiatives were adopted in the summits

	Summits	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th				
European side	European Commission		√	√	√	√		√		√				
	Austria	√				√		√	√					
	Belgium			√					√					
	Denmark				√	√				√				
	Finland			√										
	France	√		√		√								
	Germany			√	√	√				√				
	Greece													
	Ireland				√	√								
	Italy		√	√				√						
	Luxembourg													
	The Netherlands					√				√				
	Portugal					√								
	Spain			√	√									
	Sweden			√		√								
	UK		√	√	√	√								
	Cyprus	Not yet joined												
	Czech Republic													
	Estonia													
	Hungary													√
	Latvia													
	Lithuania													
	Malta													
	Poland										√			√
	Slovakia													
	Slovenia													
Bulgaria	Not yet joined									√				
Romania								√		√				
Norway	Not yet joined													
Switzerland														
Asian side	China			√	√	√		√	√	√				
	Japan	√			√	√								
	South Korea		√	√		√		√	√					
	Brunei					√		√		√				
	Indonesia					√			√	√				
	Malaysia	√		√					√					
	The Philippines		√	√		√			√	√				
	Singapore	√	√	√	√	√		√						
	Thailand	√		√	√	√		√	√	√				
	Vietnam				√	√		√	√	√				
	Cambodia	Not yet joined												
	Laos													√
	Myanmar*													
	ASEAN Secretariat	Not yet joined												

India				√
Mongolia				
Pakistan		√		√
Australia	Not yet joined			
New Zealand				
Russia				
Bangladesh	Not yet joined			

The older partners (the founding members) have contributed much more in terms of initiative proposal, sponsoring, implementation and holding MMs and SOMs. The key contributors on the Asian side include China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. They actively propose and carry out initiatives as well as offer to host various ASEM official meetings. In comparison, Brunei and Malaysia, who always send their highest level leaders to attend ASEM meetings, have not hosted much of the ASEM official meetings or been responsible for much of the initiated activities. The commitments of Indonesia and the Philippines have been fluctuating. Indonesia was not active in proposing ASEM initiatives, but has hosted four MMs and eight SOMs. The Philippines proposed more initiatives than Indonesia, but merely held one SOM thus far.

On the European side, among the founding members, the Commission, Denmark and Germany have been the most active partners in ASEM's Track1. The second tier contains Austria, Finland, France, Ireland and Spain. Notably, the UK was very active in ASEM's early years, but its degree of engagement diminished since ASEM5. On the third tier, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have high attendance in the ASEM meetings, but they were not active in terms of proposing and sponsoring activities, especially Luxembourg. In comparison, attendance records of Belgium and Sweden were not as high, but they offered to hold a few of the SOMs (Belgium, during its rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, had held the ASEM8) and were

responsible for a few initiatives. Lastly, among the European founding partners of ASEM, Greece, Italy and Portugal have shown the lowest degree of interest in the process, especially Greece.

Concerning the newer members, Cambodia, Laos, Pakistan and Mongolia on the Asian side have demonstrated their keenness through consistent presence in meetings, organising and hosting ASEM meetings. Among which, Laos offered to host the summit in 2012 and became the first non-founding partner to host a summit. Involvement of Myanmar is among the lowest. Unlike the European Commission which has been actively initiating and funding various ASEM activities, the ASEAN Secretariat's 'contribution list' in this aspect is blank.

Commitments of the new ASEM European partners are generally weak, with the exception of Poland. In particular, the Heads of Government of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia had merely shown up in one ASEM summit since their accession to the process. The three countries have not been active in proposing or hosting any initiatives either. Noteworthy, the few ASEM official meetings took place in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia were results of the obligation to these countries' term of the rotating Presidency of the EU Council. Camroux even called such duty for smaller EU member states 'unfortunate obligation'.⁴⁶¹

Furthermore, some Asian partners volunteered to host and sponsor physical institutions which established under the ASEM framework. These include ASEF in

⁴⁶¹ Camroux, "The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism" (2006): 26-7.

Singapore, Asia Europe Environmental Technology Centre in Thailand,⁴⁶² Asia Europe Institute in Malaysia, ASEM SMEs Eco Innovation Centre as well as TEIN Cooperation Centre in Seoul and ASEM Water Resources Research and Development Centre in China. Besides, in ASEM5, the Philippines offered to host the physical ASEM secretariat if it would be created. Noteworthy, Japan and the European Commission have been major financial supporters for the ASEM. In addition, Singapore's role as the 'brain-father' of the ASEM process should be acknowledged. On the European side, Germany volunteered to host the first mandate (2009-2012) of ASEM Education Secretariat. From October 2013, Indonesia will take over and host the second mandate (2013-2016). The partners who provide secondment of staff to the Education Secretariat include Belgium, China, Indonesia, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. In addition, the European Commission has created and funded an ASEM8 Coordination team to provide technical support to the administration of ASEM since 2010.

The commitment of different ASEM partners to the process varies. China, the European Commission and Germany are found to be the most active contributors. They are followed by Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Denmark (Denmark's active engagement only commenced when it hosted the fourth summit). At the other end, Greece, followed by Italy, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, have shown indifference to the ASEM process.

This list indeed differs from the expectation from other studies. For instance, Lim argued that France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK were the EU member states

⁴⁶² Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Centre was established in Bangkok in 1997, to undertake research and development activities on environmental technology. It was closed after a few years.

who had major stake in Asia (mainly due to their economic interests), so would actively engage in the process.⁴⁶³ The top three most active EU partners on the list obtained above are Germany, the Commission and Denmark, who are not traditionally key stakeholders in Asia compare with former colonial powers like the UK, France and the Netherlands. Arguably, those traditional stakeholders have more established bilateral mechanism to deal with the Asia countries which they have key interests in, such as France with Cambodia and Vietnam; as well as the UK with India, Singapore and Malaysia. In contrast, other counterparts like Germany and the Commission are more reliance on ASEM as linkage to the Asian countries. Surely, there are many factors determining each ASEM partner's activity in the process, namely historical legacy, economic interests, size and resources of the countries. It is believed that no single factor alone can explain all cases. Even within the EU member states, there are huge differences from external relation agenda to national capacity. Nor can this research generalise the behaviour of all fifty-one ASEM partners.

6.9. Conclusion

Thus far, Track 1 of the ASEM process has been very much intergovernmental and state-centric. Nation-state, which makes up forty-nine out of fifty-one members of ASEM, remains the key acting unit in the summit, MMs and SOMs. The ASEM partner governments propose and endorse initiatives; they are also the executors to carry out the initiatives; and they decide who to include or exclude in the process. Moreover, the ASEM process began with a gathering among the Heads of State/Government. The whole process, then, develops around the summit. Despite

⁴⁶³ Lim, "the unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process I: Issues for ASEM III" (2001): 2.

being called an ‘informal process’, ASEM has been rather formal as it involves mainly high level government officials.

Apart from the state level actors’ meetings, ASEM events which assemble non-governmental actors also depend on the initiation of the ASEM partner governments. ‘How often’, ‘how long’ as well as ‘how’ these Track 2 meetings would be conducted are all determined by the ASEM partner governments, especially the countries who host the particular events. As mentioned above, the host countries sometimes invite international or regional organisations as guests to the Track 1 or Track 2 meetings. There is one occasion that an international organisation, the World Bank, was invited to administrate an ASEM initiative: the ASEM Trust Fund. Occasionally, business community, academic, media experts and civil society organisations are invited to the official meetings, while under what Richards called ‘controlled inclusion’.⁴⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the ASEM’s institutional design dictates that the process remains largely state-centric in Track 1.

Despite the centrality of the nation-states on Track 1, a closer look reveals the huge difference in activity between various members. In general, the founding partners of the process are more active compared with the newer ones. Among the former group, China, Germany and the European Commission have been the most active contributors in terms of attendance, initiative proposing, sponsoring and implementation as well as the holding of MMS and SOMs. They are followed by Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Denmark. Yet, not all founding partners have actively engaged in the process. For instance, Greece, and to a

⁴⁶⁴ Richards, “Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below?: Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition” (1999): 160-1.

lesser extent Italy, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, have shown indifference to the process. While size, capacity and historical linkage appear to be influencing the activity of the ASEM partners, this research believes that there is no ‘one-size fits all’ explanation to all partners’ behaviour. Still, several possible explanations, namely historical relations with the inter-regional counterparts and economic interests, are proposed above.

Chapter Seven

ASEM Track 1.1: Competing or Complementing Track 1?

7.1. Introduction

Apart from the scheduled summits, ministerial and senior officials' meetings, ASEM partners conduct a significant number of 'sideline' meetings (i.e. additional meetings that the participants to the official meetings hold between themselves outside the plenary sessions). In particular, bilateral state-to-state meetings have been the most numerous. These meetings have been irregular and occasionally unscheduled. They are side-products of the ASEM process. These sideline meetings lie beyond ASEM's Track 1 but involve ASEM partners' officials. This research, hence, labels them as 'Track 1.1' meetings.

Thus far, the myriad of bilateralism that has proliferated on the sidelines of the ASEM process has received very little scholarly attention. In the few studies which have mentioned bilateralism in the ASEM process, it was addressed solely in a few sentences. Indeed, the irregular nature of these meetings poses challenge to the studies. No information about the sideline meetings is available from ASEM official sources; neither do the official sources from ASEM partners provide such information (the only exception is the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MOFA Japan, which provides records of all Japan-related sideline meetings during ASEM summits). Despite such difficulty, this research attempts to fill this knowledge gap by exploring two different sources in order to systemically locate as many sideline meetings that have taken place in the past ASEM summits as possible: the press conference reports

published by the MOFA Japan and the news media in five ASEM Asian countries (China, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand).

This research is aware that the two chosen sources cannot possibly provide comprehensive information related to what happens on the sidelines of ASEM – especially about those impromptu, informal or short talks take place between ASEM leaders in the corridors and hotel lobbies. Understandably, only part of the meetings of this kind is reported. However, the chosen sources are considered the most reliable and most complete sources of information about ASEM’s Track 1.1 which are available. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the findings presented here are selective snapshots rather than a full picture of everything that has happened on the sidelines of the ASEM summits. Importantly, this research is the first and unique attempt to generate empirical data of these sideline meetings.

In the existing studies, scholars either described inter-regional interaction like ASEM as a facilitator of existing bilateral relations or conceived the two approaches as competing. This chapter first offers a systematic examination on the form and frequency of the sideline meeting of the ASEM process; subsequently, it determines the weight and influence of the Track 1.1 meetings to the official tracks of the ASEM process.

7.2. ASEM’s Track 1.1 as reported in MOFA press releases

The first source utilised in this chapter is the online reports of the press conferences published by MOFA Japan after each ASEM summit. The website of MOFA Japan is the only one among ASEM member states that provides a complete set of ASEM-related information from ASEM1. Helpfully, the information is available in

English. Other Asian ASEM partners' official websites either do not contain any ASEM-related documents, provide patchy sets of documents covering a random selection of ASEM events (normally the more recent ones) or do not provide much information in English. For instance, official websites of the Thai and Vietnamese governments posted press releases about their leaders' involvement in the two most recent ASEM summit in 2010 and 2012. These documents are consulted as supplementary sources for the examination of the sideline meetings during ASEM8 and ASEM9.

According to press conference reports after each of the nine ASEM summits published by MOFA Japan, Japanese Prime Ministers have always used the ASEM summit as an occasion to hold bilateral meetings with counterparts from other ASEM partners. As displayed in Table 7.1, on average Japanese Prime Ministers have held four informal bilateral meetings on the margin of each ASEM summit (ASEM3 was not included in the calculation due to the unavailability of any information about ASEM sideline meetings from MOFA Japan press conference report). These covered Japan's ASEM partners from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the EU and also the countries in the 'Temporary Third Category' of ASEM8. The most frequently met counterparts were China, South Korea, Vietnam, France and Germany. Notably, ASEM has become one of the diplomatic tools for Japan to maintain its external relations with certain states, in which most are bigger players on the international stage. The biennial summits offer Japan a regular opportunity to meet other ASEM partners both inside and outside the plenary sessions. As the spokesman of MOFA Japan told the press after ASEM3 in Seoul,

whenever there is a leader-level meeting, the leaders not only talk to each other in the official meeting room, but they also meet over working lunches/dinners and bilateral meetings that provide an excellent opportunity for the various leaders to get to know each other personally as well as to learn about each other's respective issues and interests. In this sense, I think ASEM III provides an excellent setup for summit diplomacy, diplomacy actually conducted by individual leaders based upon personal contacts.⁴⁶⁵

Such a view from MOFA Japan is translated into concrete efforts by the Japanese government which actively organises sideline meetings between the Japanese leaders and other ASEM partners.

Table 7.1: Bilateral meetings between Japan and its ASEM partners on the fringe of ASEM summits

	Non-EU side		EU side
	Non-ASEAN countries	ASEAN countries	
ASEM1	China, S. Korea	Thailand (host)	France, Germany, UK
ASEM2	China, S. Korea	Indonesia (between foreign ministers)	-
ASEM3	no information available from the press release		
ASEM4	China, S. Korea	-	France, EU
ASEM5	-	Vietnam (host)	France
ASEM6	-	Vietnam, the Philippines	Finland (host), Spain
ASEM7	China (host), S. Korea	-	France, Germany, Italy
ASEM8	Australia, S. Korea	Vietnam	France, Germany, EU
ASEM9	-	Cambodia, Laos (host), the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam	Denmark, EU

⁴⁶⁵ Report on press conference by the Press Secretary of Japan, Ryuichiro Yamazaki, on Japanese Prime Minister attendance to the ASEM summit in Seoul, 17 October 2000, available at <www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2000/10/1017.html#3> (accessed 5 April 2008).

Apart from the press conference reports published by MOFA Japan, this research also studied the press releases published by the Thai and Vietnamese governments after their leaders attending ASEM8 and ASEM9. The noted bilateral meetings on the margins of ASEM 8 included: the then Thai Prime Minister met with President of the European Council, President of the European Commission, Prime Minister of Estonia, and Cambodian Prime Minister;⁴⁶⁶ Vietnamese Prime Minister met counterparts from Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, the UK, Australia, China and Japan.⁴⁶⁷ During ASEM9, Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung made good use of the opportunity to conduct bilateral meetings.⁴⁶⁸ These sideline meetings are summarised in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: ASEM partners who had bilateral meetings with Japan, Thailand or Vietnam on the fringe of ASEM8 and ASEM9.

	ASEM8	ASEM9
Japan	Australia, South Korea, Vietnam, EU, France, Germany	Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, EU, Denmark
Thailand	EU, Estonia, Cambodia	Japan, Laos, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland
Vietnam	Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, UK, Australia, China, Japan	Indonesia, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, UK (with the foreign minister)

⁴⁶⁶ Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore, official website, Press & Media, <www.thaiembassy.sg/press_media/news-highlights/prime-minister-abhisit-attends-asem-8-in-brussels-discusses-bilateral-is> (accessed 8 October 2010).

⁴⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, official website, News, <www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr040807105001/ns101006100656#G0FBNSMx4eyGVietnam> PM receives leaders to ASEM-8, accessed 2 November 2010> and <www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr040807105001/ns101006150149/view#KLcdR0p1axwi> (accessed 8 October 2010).

⁴⁶⁸ Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore, official website, Press & Media, <www.thaiembassy.sg/press_media/news-highlights/thailand%E2%80%99s-prime-minister-in-bilateral-talks-with-5-nations-to-boost-tra> (accessed 3 January 2013); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, official website, News, <www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr040807105001/ns121106092925> (accessed 3 January 2013).

Notably, all ASEM states analysed here were found holding sideline meetings with other ASEM partners, while Vietnam made exclusive use of the sidelines of both ASEM8 and ASEM9 to conduct bilateral relations. In comparison, Thailand held less sideline meetings during the two summits.

In order to verify the utility of the press releases from the foreign ministries of ASEM countries as sources of information, two pilot comparative experiments were conducted. Information on the sideline meetings found in the press releases published by MOFA Japan was compared with information from the *Japan Times*, the most widely-circulated English-language daily in Japan. Since publication before 2002 of the *Japan Times* was not available on FACTIVA or the daily's official website, the comparison was limited to data covering ASEM4 to ASEM9. Similarly, information given in the official press release on ASEM8 and ASEM9 issued by the Thai government was compared with ASEM8/ASEM9-related reportage in the *Bangkok Post*, the most widely-circulated English-language daily in Thailand.

The findings first demonstrated the disinterest of the *Japan Times* towards ASEM. There were only fourteen ASEM-related news items found: ASEM4 and ASEM5 were each featured in two news articles, ASEM6 was mentioned in four news items, while ASEM7 and ASEM8 were each reported in three news items; noteworthy, no coverage of ASEM9 was found in FACTIVA. This coverage of ASEM was very low compared with that of other English-language dailies monitored in this research (further details are given in the following section). From these fourteen news articles, the coverage of ASEM4 and ASEM7 did not mention any sideline meeting. From the reportage of ASEM5 and ASEM6, half of the news items highlighted the absence of sideline meeting between Japan and China or between Japan and South Korea. In the

three ASEM8-related news items, two featured the informal bilateral talk between the Japanese and Chinese Premiers. Basically, the information from the *Japan Times* seemed complementing those given in the press conference reports. While the official press conference reports listed the sideline meetings which occurred, the reportage of the *Japan Times* focused more on the meetings which could not happen, perhaps reflecting the ‘bad news is good news’ practice in news making. Restraints in publishing space, time and readers’ interests could be a few of the reasons that explain why the *Japan Times* did not list all the sideline meetings in which the Japanese leaders were involved.

In the case of Thailand, the meetings between Thailand and EU as well as between Thailand and Cambodia on the fringes of ASEM8 were reported in both the *Bangkok Post* and the official press release. Whilst the *Bangkok Post* covered also the EU-China bilateral meeting and the meeting between foreign ministers from Thailand and Russia, the official press release featured the Thailand-Estonia bilateral meetings instead. In the ASEM8 sample, half of the information from the two sources overlapped. In the ASEM9 sample, the difference between the official sources and the media were even bigger. As listed in Table 7.2, Thai Prime Minister held bilateral meeting with her counterparts from Japan, Laos, Bulgaria, Estonia and Finland. On the other hand, the *Bangkok Post* reported bilateral meetings of Thai Prime Minister with leaders from Italy, Poland, Norway, Mongolia and Japan. The only sideline meeting covered by both source was the Thai-Japanese one.

The results from the two pilot experiments showed that information from the ASEM partner governments and from news media do not always corresponded well to each other. Sometimes, the official press releases appeared more informative than the news

media in terms of information on sideline meetings. This is perhaps not surprising, as the foreign ministries who prepared these documents hold more information than the media. Moreover, official documents focus normally on what has been done (the meetings which the government had successfully arranged), while the news media tends to be more critical and prefers to highlight the meetings which the government failed to arrange. This research keeps these differences in mind throughout the analysis of both sources. Although the news media cannot provide a full picture of everything that happens, it is still considered a valid source of data. In both Japanese and Thai cases, news media appears to be a complementary source to the official documents. In particular, the availability of official records on the sideline meetings remains limited and patchy, therefore, the news media serves as a reliable and necessary complementary source.

7.3. ASEM Track 1.1 as reported in Asian news media

The second source used for the identification of sideline talks or meetings between ASEM summiters was the news media. Six reputable and widely circulated English-language dailies from five Asian ASEM countries were studied (Table 7.3). Data pertaining to ASEM6 was sourced directly from *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific 2006* dataset. News items portraying other ASEM summits were searched from the online news archive FACTIVA. Since the news from *Korea Herald* published before 1998 was not available on FACTIVA and the paper's official online archive is not available in English, the analysis of the *Korea Herald* excludes the coverage of ASEM1. Table 7.3 lists the basic information of the monitored news outlets as well as information about the data collection from each outlet.

Table 7.3: Information of the monitored English-language dailies

Locations	Dailies chosen	Founded	Circulation	Time-frame	Sources of news
Mainland China	<i>China Daily</i>	1981	800 000	ASEM1-ASEM9	<i>the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific</i> for ASEM6; FACTIVA for other periods
Hong Kong, China	<i>South China Morning Post</i>	1903	107 080 (2008)		
South Korea	<i>Korea Herald</i>	1953	50% market share	ASEM2 - ASEM9	
Singapore	<i>Strait Times</i>	1845	365 800	ASEM1 - ASEM9	
Thailand	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	1946	65 000 (2007)		
Indonesia	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	1983	50 000		FACTIVA only

As explained in Chapter 3, the timeframe for the data collection concentrated on the ‘peak’ periods in ASEM’s media coverage – one month before an ASEM summit to one week after the one-and-a-half-day summit from 1996 to 2012. News outputs of the English-language newspapers for these periods were searched using the key phrases ‘Asia Europe Meeting’, ‘ASEM’ or ‘Asia Europe Summit’. A total of 904 news items were collected and analysed.

Table 7.4: Number of ASEM news collected in each monitored daily

	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>Korea Herald*</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>Total</i>
ASEM1	1	12	0	21	60	118	212
ASEM2	0	24	21	9	47	21	122
ASEM3	8	10	148	7	17	17	207
ASEM4	7	7	14	2	8	15	53
ASEM5	8	11	7	8	9	14	57
ASEM6	12	4	4	5	18	9	52
ASEM7	28	13	10	14	17	22	104
ASEM8	6	3	9	3	6	8	35
ASEM9	13	4	3	11	9	22	62
Total	83	88	216	80	191	246	904

From the five English-language dailies monitored in the ‘ASEM1 period’ (the *Korea Herald* was not included), 212 pieces of news were found mentioning ASEM (Table 7.4). For the ‘ASEM2 period’, 122 ASEM-related news items were identified in the six dailies studied (including the *Korea Herald*), 207 news items were found in the ‘ASEM3 period’. 53 pieces of news for the ‘ASEM4 period’, 57 news items in the ‘ASEM5 period’, 52 news items in the ‘ASEM6 period’, 104 pieces of news in ‘ASEM7 period’, 35 news items in the ‘ASEM8 period’, and 62 pieces of news in ‘ASEM9 period’ were collected. Notably, the volume of ASEM news varied across the Asian locations as well as across the years. As displayed in Figure 7.1, media attention given to the ASEM summit has witnessed a significant decline since ASEM4. The eighth summit in Brussels received the lowest media attention, with only thirty-five news items in total from the six dailies combined. This trend was shared in all monitored news outlets except the *China Daily*. The Chinese paper demonstrated no interest in covering ASEM before ASEM3.⁴⁶⁹ The volume of ASEM coverage then sustained between six to thirteen pieces, whilst the reportage of ASEM7 (held in Beijing) recorded a spike (increased from an average of 6 pieces of news, between ASEM1 and ASEM6, to 28 news items on ASEM).

For the most recent summit in Vientiane, reportage in all monitored Asian dailies recorded an increase except in the *Korean Herald*. The three ASEM-related news items identified were indeed about the work of the ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Centre which located in Seoul. The *Korean Herald* did not cover ASEM9 at all! On the other hand, the other five monitored newspapers devoted more attention in

⁴⁶⁹ One news items on ASEM1, no reportage on ASEM2, eight news items on ASEM3, seven news items on ASEM4, eight news items on ASEM5, twelve news items on ASEM6, twenty-eight news items on ASEM7 and six news items on ASEM8.

covering ASEM9 than ASEM8. Indeed, this rise follows a seeming trend that Asian media tends to pay more attention to the ASEM meetings which took place in Asia.

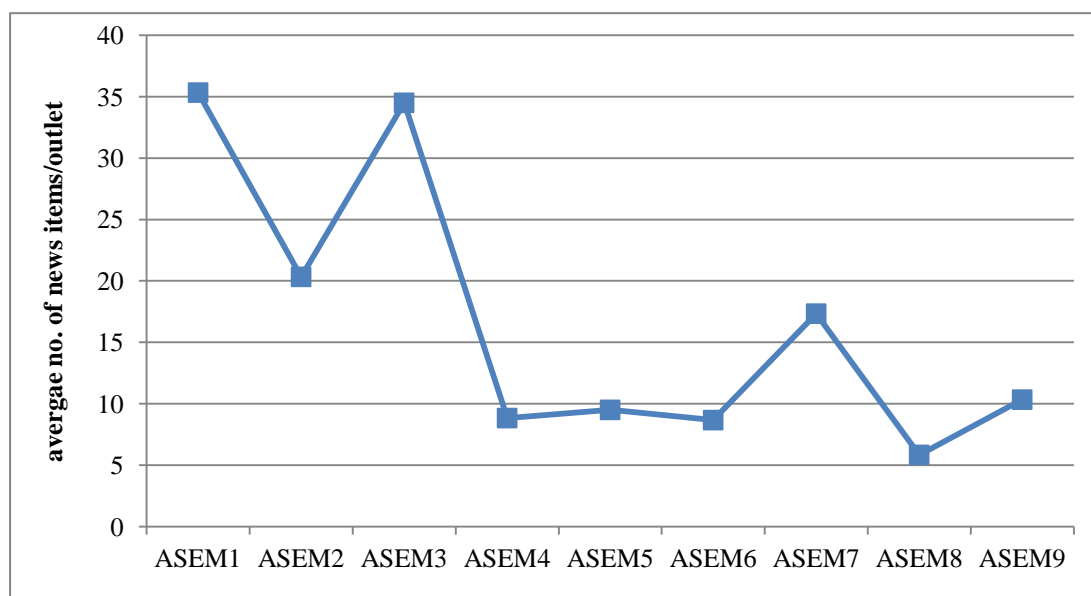


Figure 7.1: Volume of news reportage on each ASEM summit in the six monitored dailies.

Comparing across the news outlets, cumulatively, the *Bangkok Post* from Thailand, the *Korean Herald* from South Korea and the *Straits Times* from Singapore rendered the highest overall attention to report on ASEM summits (Table 7.4 and Figure 7.2). On the other hand, coverage of the ASEM summits in the *Jakarta Post*, *China Daily* and *South China Morning Post* were much lower, even though the taking place of ASEM7 has boosted the coverage of ASEM in China (both mainland and Hong Kong). Noteworthy, the reportage in the *Bangkok Post* and the *Korean Herald* concentrated mainly on the specific summit their respective country hosted. The *Bangkok Post* recorded 118 pieces of news (out of a total of 246) on ASEM1, while 148 news items (out of a total of 216) on ASEM3 were found in the *Korean Herald*. The visibility of ASEM in the *China Daily* did rise during ASEM7 (28 news items out

of 104), but was still low compared with the coverage of ASEM1 in the *Bangkok Post* or of ASEM3 in the *Korean Herald*.

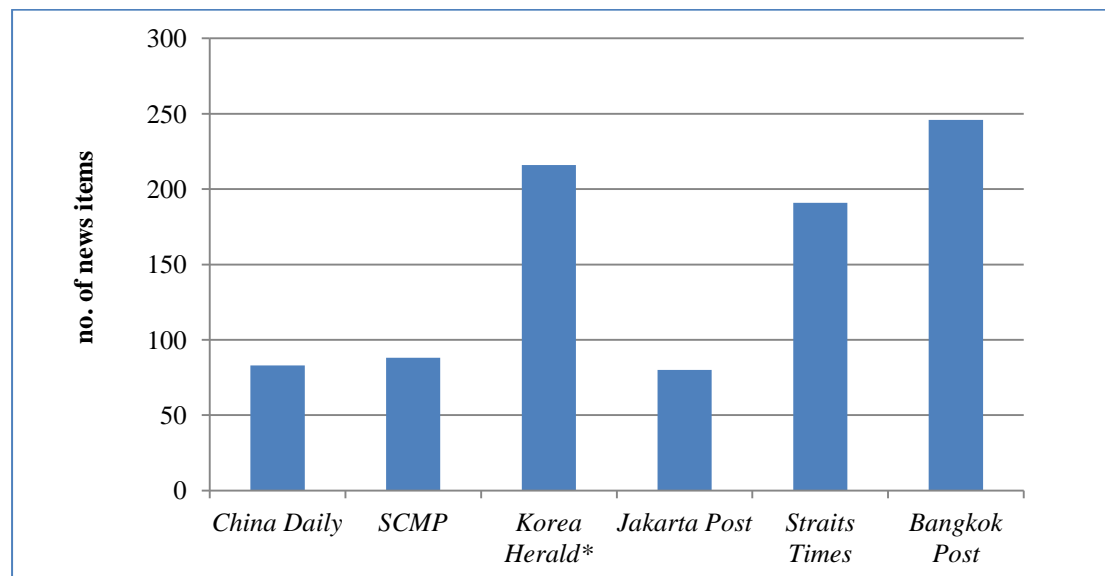


Figure 7.2: Volume of news reportage on ASEM in each of the six monitored dailies.

Significantly, among the 904 news items collected, only a small portion was devoted to cover ASEM itself (just a quarter of the analysed news articles). In the majority of the reportage, news writers were more interested in other events, especially the sideline meetings that took place on the margins of the official summits. These comprised intra-regional meetings among Asian ASEM participants, asymmetric bilateral meetings between the EU and one Asian state, state-to-state meetings between two Asian ASEM states as well as between one Asian state and one European state. Bilateral state-to-state meetings were the most numerous. Whilst an ASEM summit lasts normally one-and-a-half days, the yield of sideline meetings was high (Tables 7.5–7.12).

Looking into the details of the news reportage of ASEM1, 28 bilateral meetings on the margins of the first ASEM summit were noted. The then Chinese Premier Li Peng alone conducted bilateral meetings with seven of his Asian counterparts, three

European ones as well as the head of the European Commission. Besides, the Heads of state of Indonesia, Singapore and the hosting country, Thailand, were each involved in at least six bilateral meetings on the sidelines.

Table 7.5: Sideline meetings in ASEM1 mentioned by the monitored dailies⁴⁷⁰

ASEM1				
	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>
Asia-Asia bilateral	Japan- S. Korea			
	China-Japan	China-Indonesia	China-Japan	
			China-S.Korea	
			China-Thailand	
			Singapore-Thailand	
			China-Singapore	Japan-Thailand
			Malaysia-Singapore	Malaysia-Thailand
			China-Malaysia	
			China-Vietnam	
			S.Korea visited Singapore	
Asymmetric bilateral			China-EU	
Asia-Europe bilateral		Indonesia-Austria	Singapore-Austria	
		Indonesia-Denmark	China-Germany	
		Indonesia-France	China-France	Thailand-Italy
		Indonesia-Ireland	Singapore-Ireland	Thailand-UK
	Vietnam-UK	Indonesia-Portugal	Singapore-Germany	Indonesia-Portugal
		China-UK		Korea-UK
	UK visited HK		France visited Singapore	
			Belgium visited Singapore, Vietnam	
			the Netherlands visited Singapore	

In the news articles on ASEM1, the then British Prime Minister John Major was the most active European leader in terms of engagement in sideline meetings, followed by

⁴⁷⁰ The *Korea Herald* was excluded. The one ASEM-related news items collected from the *China Daily* during the ‘ASEM1 period’ did not mentioned any sideline meeting.

the then French President Jacques Chirac. Apart from holding bilateral talks during the ‘free time’ of ASEM1, Chirac paid a state visit to Singapore before flying to Bangkok, whereas Major visited Hong Kong after the Bangkok summit. Concerning official visits, Singapore emerged as a main beneficiary of ASEM1, with leaders from France, Belgium, the Netherlands and South Korea officially visited the city-state before or after the ASEM summit in Bangkok.

Moving on to the reportage of ASEM2, less state visits were noted in the news media (the then Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji visited three EU member states and the then Indonesian President Soeharto visited Malaysia and Italy). Moreover, the number of sideline meetings reported decreased slightly to 26 (23 between the Heads of State/Government, two between foreign ministers and one among the Heads of States of the ASEAN+3 countries). Again, the Chinese leader was found to be the busiest on the fringes, followed by Indonesia and the hosting country, the UK. Remarkably, China and the EU launched their annual summit the day before ASEM2, which brought diplomatic relations between the Union and China to a new height.

Table 7.6: Sideline meetings in ASEM2 mentioned by the monitored dailies⁴⁷¹
 Note: (FMM) refers to foreign ministers’ meeting

ASEM2					
	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>
Intra-regional		ASEAN+3			
Asia-Asia bilateral	China-S. Korea		China-Indonesia		
	Japan-S. Korea		Indonesia-Japan		
		China- Singapore		China-Singapore	
		China- Thailand			China-Thailand

⁴⁷¹ There was no ASEM-related news items found from the *China Daily* during the ‘ASEM2 period’.

			Indonesia-Malaysia	Malaysia-Singapore	
		China- Vietnam		Singapore- S. Korea (FMM)	
		Indonesia visited Malaysia			
EU-Asian asymmetric bilateral	China-EU			China-EU	
				Singapore-EU (FMM)	
Asia-Europe bilateral	S.Korea-France	China- Ireland	Indonesia-France		Thailand-France
		China-Italy			Thailand-Italy
		China-Spain	Indonesia-Germany		
	China-UK			China-UK	
	S.Korea-UK	Japan-UK	Indonesia-UK	Thailand-UK	
		China visited Finland	Indonesia visited Italy		
	China visited France				
		China visited Germany			

Two years later, during the Seoul Summit, the monitored media reported 39 sideline meetings – 28 between the Heads of State/Government, ten between ministers and one among the Heads of States of the ASEAN+3 countries. According to the figures given by the Seoul government, ASEM3 participants excluding itself as the host, held at least 68 rounds of bilateral summit and ministerial-level talks on the fringe.⁴⁷² The organising team officials described the number as ‘astounding’.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷² Cheong-mo Yoo, “ASEM guests hold 68 rounds of bilateral talks: To help effectively settle sticky outstanding issues in economy, trade and politics”, *Korea Herald*, 20 October 2000; Cheong-mo Yoo, “Bilateral talks expected to continue after summit, *Korea Herald*, 21 October 2000.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

Table 7.7: Sideline meetings in ASEM3 mentioned by the monitored dailies⁴⁷⁴

Note: (M) refers to ministerial-level meeting

ASEM3						
	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	
Intra-regional		ASEAN+3				
Asia-Asia bilateral		China-S. Korea				
		China-Indonesia			Indonesia-Singapore	
		Brunei-Japan				
		Brunei-S. Korea				
		S. Korea-Malaysia			Indonesia visited Malaysia	
		S. Korea-Indonesia (M)			Indonesia visited Singapore	
		S. Korea-Thailand (M)				
		China-Japan (M)				
			China visited Japan			Singapore visited Japan
			China visited S. Korea			
EU-Asian asymmetric bilateral	Patten visited HK	S. Korea-EU				
Asia-European bilateral		China-Germany				
		China-Ireland				
		China-Spain				
		Indonesia-Portugal				
		S. Korea-Denmark			Singapore-Denmark	
		S. Korea-Finland				
		S. Korea-France				
		S. Korea-Germany				
		S. Korea-Ireland				
		S. Korea-Italy				
		S. Korea-Luxembourg				
		S. Korea-Netherlands			Singapore-Netherlands	
		S. Korea-Portugal				
		S. Korea-Spain			Singapore-Spain	
		S. Korea-Sweden				
		S. Korea-UK				
		China-Denmark (M)				
		Indonesia-Germany (M)				
		S. Korea-France (M)				
		Singapore-France (M)				
	Thailand-France (M)					
	Philippines-UK (M)					
				Indonesia-UK		

⁴⁷⁴ The seventeen ASEM-related news items collected from the *Bangkok Post* during the ‘ASEM3 period’ did not mention any sideline meeting.

		Vietnam-UK (M)			
		Singapore-France			
		France visited S. Korea			

Being the host, South Korean leaders (from the President to ministers of different portfolios) were preoccupied both with the official summit and on the sidelines. In addition, the delegates from China, Indonesia and Singapore were also found busy handling bilateral diplomatic relations on the sidelines. On the EU side, France and the UK engaged most actively in holding bilateral meetings with the Asian ASEM partners on the fringe. Furthermore, holding the ASEM summit brought Heads of State from China and France to pay state visits to South Korea.

Starting from ASEM4, the process lost not only media attention, but the number of sideline meetings reported also dropped significantly (Table 7.8, Table 7.9 and Table 7.10). From the collected news items, 16 bilateral meetings took place on the margins of ASEM4, 13 meetings were reported at ASEM5, and 19 meetings during ASEM6.

Table 7.8: Sideline meetings in ASEM4 mentioned by the monitored dailies⁴⁷⁵

ASEM 4					
	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>
Asia-Asia bilateral	S.Korea-Japan	China-Japan			
			China- Thailand	Singapore-Thailand	
Asymmetric bilateral			China-Vietnam	Singapore-Vietnam	
	S.Korea-EU	China-EU			
Asia- Europe bilateral	S.Korea-Denmark		China- Denmark	Singapore-France	
	S.Korea-Netherlands			Singapore-Greece	
			China visited Austria	Singapore-Italy	
			China visited Denmark	Singapore-Luxembourg	
		China visited France	Singapore-Spain		

⁴⁷⁵ The two ASEM-related news items collected from the *Jakarta Post* during the ‘ASEM4 period’ did not mention any sideline meeting.

Table 7.97: Sideline meetings in ASEM5 mentioned by the monitored dailies.⁴⁷⁶

ASEM 5					
	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	Bangkok Post
Asia-Asia bilateral	China-Japan (FMM)	China-S. Korea			
	NO China-Japan		S.Korea visited Vietnam		
	China visited Vietnam				
Asymmetric bilateral	China-EU (FMM)				Thailand-EU
Asia-Europe bilateral		China-Estonia	S.Korea-Germany	Singapore- Italy	Thailand-France
	China-Finland				Thailand-Latvia
		China-UK			
		China-Luxembourg (FMM)		Ireland visited Singapore	
		China- Netherlands (FMM)		France visited Vietnam	
		France visited China		France visited China	
		France visited Singapore		France visited Singapore	

In ASEM4, Singapore overtook China in terms of activity in bilateral meetings on the sideline of the Copenhagen summit. In the Hanoi and Helsinki summits, China resumed first place in popularity in the sideline meetings. In ASEM6 Indonesia, with the presence of its President, became active again on the sidelines of the summit, after being ‘silent’ in ASEM4 and ASEM5 (the then President Megawati did not attend any ASEM summit during her mandate). In addition, the EU and South Korea commenced their annual bilateral summit after the plenary summit in Copenhagen.

⁴⁷⁶ The eight ASEM-related news items collected from the *Jakarta Post* during the ‘ASEM5 period’ did not mention any sideline meeting.

Table 7.10: Sideline meetings in ASEM6 mentioned by the monitored dailies.

ASEM 6						
	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>
Intra-regional				ASEAN+3	ASEAN5 ⁴⁷⁷	
Asia-Asia bilateral	NO Japan-China					
	No Japan-S. Korea	China-Vietnam		No Japan- S.Korea		
				Japan-Philippines		
Asymmetric bilateral				Malaysia-Singapore		
			EU-China			EU-Indonesia
Asia-Europe bilateral				EU- Singapore		
		China-Latvia			Thailand-France	Indonesia-France
		China-Netherlands	China-Denmark		Thailand-UK	Indonesia-Germany
		China-Poland	China-Slovakia			Indonesia-Italy
		China visited UK		Singapore visited UK		Indonesia-Spain
	S. Korea visited Romania		China visited Finland			Indonesia visited Norway
		China visited Germany				

Noteworthy, the analysis of ASEM6 reportage showed that Asian media, especially those from Northeast Asia, were fascinated by the interaction between the then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his counterparts from China and South Korea. Whether Koizumi's government would request Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao or the then South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun for bilateral meetings was the main focus, overshadowing the actual bilateral meetings which did take place.

Similar to the number of sideline meetings, the number of state visits also decreased

⁴⁷⁷ There was a meeting among Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia and Vietnam.

during ASEM4: only China was recorded as undertaking official visits (to Austria, Denmark and France). From the ASEM5 reportage, the Heads of state from China, South Korea and France paid official visits to Vietnam, with the French President also visited China and Singapore. The then Irish Prime Minister Ahern visited Singapore after attending the Hanoi ASEM summit. In 2006, China extended the trip to Helsinki to a three-state visit (to Finland, the UK and Germany). Similarly, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono extended his European trip to Norway. Furthermore, the then South Korea President Roh Moo-hyun visited Romania before attending ASEM6 in Helsinki, whereas Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visited the UK before the summit.

Noteworthy was that although thirteen new members joined ASEM in the fifth summit, very few of them appeared involved in the sideline activities according to the reportage of ASEM5 and ASEM6 – especially the newly joined ASEAN countries. Sideline meetings were concentrated on ASEM founding members even though two more rounds of enlargement, to another eight new countries and the ASEAN Secretariat, took place (see also Table 7.11 and Table 7.12). The dataset indicated that the older partners have been the main ‘users’ of the opportunity for conducting sideline businesses during ASEM summits.

The 2008 ASEM summit in Beijing, the first large scale summit after the outbreak of the global financial crisis, attracted much more media attention than the two previous meetings. Its reportage in the six monitored newspapers doubled that of ASEM4, ASEM5 or ASEM6. At the same time, reports of sideline meetings also doubled, with 35 sideline meetings recorded on the margins of ASEM7. Being the summit host, Chinese leaders were the busiest during ASEM7. After the summit, the then Chinese

Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi confirmed that there were more than forty bilateral meetings held between Chinese leaders and its ASEM counterparts on the fringe of the Beijing summit.⁴⁷⁸ In addition, the then South Korea President Lee Myung-bak demonstrated his activity in dealing with individual ASEM partners bilaterally on the sideline of ASEM7 and ASEM8. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also held a substantial number of bilateral meetings on the margin of ASEM7 (the day before ASEM8, he flew back from Brussels to Singapore as his mother passed away).

During ASEM7, eleven ASEM partners extended their trip to Beijing into a state visit to China: Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia.⁴⁷⁹ Among them, the Heads of state from Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Germany and Ireland brought along to China their business and trade delegations. Apart from the composition of the official delegations, these official visits were different from those of the previous summits as the attention of ASEM partners concentrated solely on China. There was no report on any ASEM leaders visiting other Asian countries before or after attending the Beijing Summit. On the other hand, before and after ASEM8 in Brussels, China visited Greece, Italy and Turkey. From the monitored news items on ASEM8, there was no state visit of other ASEM countries.

⁴⁷⁸ “Chinese foreign minister says ASEM summit was productive”, *Xinhua News Agency* news feed, 25 October 2008, sourced from FACTIVA.

⁴⁷⁹ Information from news feeds of *Xinhua News Agency* in 2008, sourced from FACTIVA.

Table 7.11: Sideline meetings in ASEM7 mentioned by the monitored dailies.

ASEM7							
	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>SC MP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>	
Intra-regional	ASEAN+3			ASEAN+3			
				ASEAN5 ⁴⁸⁰		ASEAN	
Asia-Asia bilateral	S.Korea- Japan		China-Japan	Thailand-Cambodia			
			China- India	China- Thailand	China- Singapore	China- Indonesia	
			China- Cambodia		Indonesia-Singapore		
					Singapore- Thailand	Indonesia- Thailand	
	S.Korea- Vietnam				Singapore- Vietnam	Indonesia- Cambodia	
					Singapore- Philippines		
	EU-Asian asymmetric bilateral				EU-Burma (SOM)		EU- Indonesia
				EU-China	EU- Thailand		
	Asia-Europe bilateral			China-Germany			
				China-Belgium			
S.Korea- Denmark			China- Denmark				
		China-Finland					
S.Korea-France			China-France	Thailand- France(FMM)			
S.Korea-Poland			China-Ireland		Singapore- Poland		
		China-Slovenia		Singapore- Netherlands			
		Germany, Ireland, Slovenia visited China					

Given that ASEM8 witnessed the lowest recorded media coverage, the numbers of sideline meetings and of state visits reported during ASEM8 were also meagre. Table 7.12 listed 15 bilateral meetings took place on the margins of the Brussels summit. No intra-regional meeting was mentioned. On the other hand, similar to the hosts of the

⁴⁸⁰ Meeting among Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.

previous summits, Belgium benefited from having attendees of the ASEM summit at home. The number of bilateral meetings it held with the Asian leaders was higher than any of the previous ASEM summits.

Table 7.12: Sideline meetings in ASEM8 mentioned by the monitored dailies.

ASEM8								
	<i>Korea Herald</i>	<i>SC MP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>		
Asia-Asia bilateral	S. Korea-China		China-Japan					
	S. Korea-Japan				Thailand-Cambodia			
EU-Asian asymmetric bilateral	S. Korea-EU				Singapore-EU		Thailand-EU	
				China- EU			China-EU	
Asia-Europe bilateral	S. Korea-Belgium		China visited Belgium	Singapore-Belgium				China-France
	S. Korea-Germany		China visited Greece					
	S. Korea-UK		China visited Italy					
Asia-non-EU bilateral	S. Korea-Australia	China visited Turkey			Thailand-Russia			

Regarding the most recent ASEM summit, seventeen bilateral meetings were reported. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong appeared to be the busiest ASEM leader on the fringe. Again, the non-happening of any bilateral meeting between China and Japan attracted attention of the media. Notably, Norway appeared to be the most active first time participant to ASEM in engaging into bilateral sideline meetings. Indeed, more new members (more precisely the non-founding members) are utilising the opportunities on the margins of ASEM summits to conduct sideline businesses. There were also more recorded state visits compared to the Brussels summit. Indonesia Prime Minister made his trip to Laos an official state visit. Leaders of the EU, van Rompuy and Barroso, extended their Vientiane trip to a list of other South East Asian states including Myanmar (Table 7.13).

Table 7.13: Sideline meetings in ASEM9 mentioned by the monitored dailies.⁴⁸¹

ASEM9					
	<i>SCMP</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Straits Times</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>Jakarta Post</i>
Asia-Asia bilateral	No China-Japan			Thailand- Japan	
		China-Laos			Indonesia-Laos (also official visit)
EU-Asian asymmetric bilateral		EU visited East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam	Singapore-EU	EU visited Myanmar, Thailand	EU visited Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
		China-France	Singapore-Czech		Indonesia-France
Asia-Europe bilateral		China-Italy	Singapore-Denmark		
			Singapore-Estonia	Thailand- Italy	
			Singapore-Finland	Thailand-Poland	
	China-Norway		Singapore-Norway	Thailand-Norway	
			Singapore-Switzerland		
			Luxembourg visited Singapore		Indonesia visited UK

In summary, the above snapshots showed that ASEM’s Track 1.1 has played a recurring part in the ASEM process, allowing participants to maximise diplomatic accomplishments and handle ‘private’ affairs in smaller groups, mostly bilaterally. For the five ASEM countries in which the monitored newspapers were based (China, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand), all have contributed to the flourishing of Track 1.1. Yet, the degree of their involvement varies. Moreover, on the

⁴⁸¹ The three ASEM-related news items collected from the *Korea Herald* during the ‘ASEM9 period’ did not mention any sideline meeting.

sidelines of ASEM2, ASEM3, ASEM6 and ASEM7, the ASEAN+3 countries conducted intra-regional meetings. These additional opportunities for the ASEAN+3 countries to meet can be seen as facilitating the group's intra-regional cooperation, a potential function of inter-regionalism derived from liberal institutionalism. From the social constructivist perspective, these extra meetings help enhancing the regional coherence among the ASEAN+3 countries.

Moreover, this media analysis indicated the different degree of activity of the ASEM partners outside the official summits (Table 7.14). Unsurprisingly, the sideline meetings have been centred on China – an emerging economic powerhouse. Indonesia and Singapore also actively included a heavy sideline working schedule to manage external relations with other ASEM partners. Notably, in these cases, an obvious pre-condition emerged – the attendance of the heads of state. There was no reported sideline meeting held by the Indonesian delegation during ASEM4, ASEM5 and ASEM8. In these three summits, Indonesia was represented by ministers (Foreign Minister in ASEM8, Coordinating Minister for the Economy in ASEM4 and ASEM5). Although the then Indonesian President was also absent at the London summit, the vice-President who led the Indonesia delegation, was still able to hold bilateral meetings with the heads of several ASEM partners. Whilst the level of representatives did not seem to affect participation in the plenary meeting of an ASEM member, it did matter for the sideline meetings, especially the bilateral ones. Similarly, the number of sideline meetings involving Singapore in ASEM8 and China in ASEM9 reduced significantly, supposedly as results of Singapore Prime Minister Lee's absence in ASEM8 and China Premier Wen's early leave from ASEM9.

Table 7.14: ASEM partners who held bilateral meetings with China, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore or Thailand on the sidelines of ASEM summits reported in the news items analysed

	China	S. Korea	Indonesia	Singapore	Thailand
ASEM1	Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, S. Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam	China, Japan, Singapore	China	China, Malaysia, Thailand	China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore
	European Commission, France, Germany, UK	UK	Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland, Portugal	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands	Italy, UK
ASEM2	Indonesia, S. Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam	China, Japan, Singapore	China, Japan, Malaysia	Malaysia, S. Korea	China
	EU, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, UK	France, UK	France, Germany, Italy, UK	EU	France, Italy, UK
ASEM3	Indonesia, Japan, S. Korea	Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand	China, Malaysia, Singapore	Japan, Indonesia	S. Korea
	Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain	EU, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK	Germany, Portugal, UK	Denmark, France, Netherlands, Spain	France
ASEM4	Japan, Thailand, Vietnam	Japan		Thailand, Vietnam	China, Singapore
	EU, Austria, Denmark, France	EU, Denmark, Netherlands	-	France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain	-
ASEM5	Japan, S. Korea, Vietnam	Vietnam		-	-
	EU, Estonia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands	Germany	-	France, Ireland, Italy	EU, France, Latvia

	Vietnam	-	-	Malaysia	-
ASEM6	EU, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, UK	(Romania)	EU, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, (Norway)	EU, UK	France, UK
ASEM7	Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand	Japan, Vietnam	Cambodia, China, Singapore, Thailand	China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam	Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Singapore
	EU, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia	Denmark, France, Poland	EU	Netherlands, Poland	EU, France
ASEM8	Japan, S. Korea	China, Japan, Australia	-	-	Cambodia, Russia
	EU, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, (Turkey)	EU, Belgium, Germany, UK		EU, Belgium	EU
ASEM9	Laos	-	Laos	-	Japan, Mongolia
	France, Italy, Norway		France, UK	EU, Czech, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Switzerland	Italy, Poland, Norway

From the European side, the most frequently seen ASEM partners involved in the bilateral meetings with leaders from the five monitored Asian countries were France, the UK, the EU itself (usually represented by the President of the European Commission and/or leaders of the member state who hold the Council rotating Presidency) and Germany. They were followed by Italy and Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland. Among the newly-joined, Poland and Estonia were found to be the most active.

In addition, the findings clearly showed that the host countries of the ASEM summits could benefit from having all other ASEM partners on their soil. They were involved in more sideline meetings in the particular ASEM summit which they hosted, in comparison with other ASEM partners as well as compared to other summits. Apart from sideline meetings, some ASEM leaders have made good use of the opportunity of travelling to the summit venue and expanded the trip to state visits to neighbouring countries. For instance, Chinese leaders have regularly expanded the trip to ASEM summits to official visits to the host country and neighbouring countries of the summit hosts. French leaders have also done the same frequently.

Significantly, Table 7.14 indicated that the five ASEM countries monitored have had more bilateral meetings with countries from Europe than with other Asian countries, with the difference increasing since ASEM4. Although no empirical research was conducted on the European ASEM members, it is assumed that they would not hold bilateral meeting with their EU counterparts on the sidelines of ASEM, as they have many meeting opportunities under the EU mechanism. Therefore, Track 1.1 favoured ‘inter-regional’ state-to-state interactions more than ‘intra-regional’ ones.

Confirming the prominence of these sideline meetings, ASEM8 and ASEM9 allocated one-and-a-half days (before the opening of the official plenary meeting) in the official programme for bilateral meetings, with meeting venues provided. This demonstrated that Track 1.1 had gained official recognition. In fact, gathering on the sideline is not a unique practice in ASEM – sideline meetings, especially bilateral ones, have been common in other inter-regional and multilateral top-level summits. For example, during the November 2011 APEC summit (in Hawaii), Chinese President Hu Jintao had bilateral meetings with US President Barack Obama as well as leaders from

Canada, Vietnam and Japan.⁴⁸² During the G20 summit in Cannes (November 2011), the then Japanese Prime Minister Noda had bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Germany, Britain as well as heads of the EU (Van Rompuy and Barroso).⁴⁸³

The media analysis data presented here reflected the multitude of sideline bilateral contacts in ASEM. Yet, the potential limitations of this dataset are acknowledged. The statistics were generated from the press coverage in just five ASEM member countries. The membership of ASEM enlarged from twenty-six in ASEM1 to fifty-one in ASEM9. This research is well aware that it has not generated a complete list of all the bilateral meetings which may have taken place. For instance, the bilateral meeting between leaders from Thailand and Estonia on the fringe of ASEM8 was not reported by any of the monitored newspapers. Also, some of the bilateral talks involving the Japanese leaders identified in the previous section (Table 7.1) were not mentioned in the news articles collected.

Seemingly and unsurprisingly, the news outlets were mainly interested in sideline meetings which involved their own country. This could be explained from a news production perspective, as the newspaper could more easily ‘sell’ news stories with their respective state as a main actor to local readers who are more familiar with national affairs than the international ones. Owing to the national-focus of the selected newspapers, reportage of sideline meetings involving the five countries researched (China, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand) were likely to be higher

⁴⁸² “France to return Korea’s royal books on lease”, *Korea Herald*, 13 November 2010; “Chinese president meets leaders on sidelines of G20 summit”, *Xinhua News Agency* news feed, 11 November 2011; “雙邊會晤 胡總一日四場”, *Mingpao*, 14 November 2011.

⁴⁸³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “G20 Cannes Summit November 3-4 2011”, <www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/eu/meeting1111.html> (accessed 15 November 2011).

than that of other ASEM partners. Yet, this analysis still clearly illustrated the variation among the five monitored ASEM Asian partners. China has been involved in the largest number of sideline meetings thus far. After identifying the active actors and their actions in ASEM's Track 1.1, the next section aims at comparing them to what happened in Track 1. Through such comparisons, this research explores the relations between the two tracks, and investigates whether they are competing or complementary.

7.4. Difference inside and outside of the meeting room

Whilst the official ASEM summits have been labelled as 'talk-shop' and criticised for lacking in substance, the meetings on Track 1.1 have provided an additional venue for more substantial exchanges. For instance, on the fringe of ASEM6, the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi and the then President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement; an agreement was signed between the European Investment Bank and China on assisting China to cut energy use and greenhouse gas emissions; and the EU and South Korea met on ASEM's margin for FTA negotiations.

In Track 1.1 of ASEM7, an FTA was signed between China and Singapore. Moreover, China and Vietnam signed cooperative documents and a memorandum on bilateral economic and trade cooperation. They also agreed to establish a hotline between the two governments. Besides, China and Denmark signed two documents of cooperation – on technology innovation and fighting against climate change. Ireland and China also signed an array of agreements, aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries' regulatory bodies and creating new opportunities for greater trade and investment. Apart from bilateral agreements, ASEAN+3 countries

met on the fringe of ASEM7 and agreed to create an \$80 billion joint fund for liquidity needs for partners who fall into financial crisis. During the Brussels summit in 2010, the EU and Malaysia began bilateral FTA negotiations. In addition, the EU-South Korea FTA was signed during the fifth EU-South Korea Summit which was scheduled back to back with ASEM8.

Importantly, this research is not suggesting that ASEM can claim all the credit for the successful conclusions of the aforementioned agreements. Instead, it is aware that these agreements were results of many other meetings between the respective parties outside ASEM. ASEM biennial summits are far from being frequent enough to allow a complete development of a bilateral deal. Yet, ASEM's Track 1.1 sometimes happens to be a convenient platform for pairs of partners to seal concrete deals.

What this research is illustrating is that many ASEM partners do want to as well as are ready to adopt cooperation and concrete deals with each other. Yet, instead of seeking consensus among a vast number of members in the plenary sessions, ASEM partners take bilateralism for concrete cooperation. Reaching a deal between two partners is much easier. The fact that the EU had to abandon its FTA negotiations with ASEAN and shifted to separate negotiations with individual ASEAN member states (first Singapore, then Malaysia; Vietnam and the Philippines are in the pipeline) served as an example. While the bilateralism on the margins flourished, the ASEM process indirectly contributed to tangible deals which it was not designed to achieve.

The large and heterogeneous membership made it practically difficult for all ASEM partners to reach a consensus for concrete action. In contrast, on Track 1.1, ASEM partners could make substantial deals in a small group - although it is unrealistic to

claim that the aforementioned agreements would not have been signed without the ASEM process. The findings here showed that the existence of Track 1.1 facilitated those bilateral deals. It was especially helpful in allowing potential pairs to meet up. Therefore, it is not entirely true to view the ASEM process merely as a talkfest, even though Track 1 is never designed to deliver.

Another difference between meetings in Track 1 and those in Track 1.1 was the content of discussion. Sensitive issues such as human rights and territorial disputes have been avoided in the plenary meetings to sustain a harmonious atmosphere. Also, issues which concerned only a few partners did not normally enter the agenda of the summit. The existence of Track 1.1 allowed such issues to be discussed between interested partners during their trip to an ASEM summit.

Occasionally, these sideline meetings offered related parties the unique chance for face-to-face meetings, especially when separate bilateral meetings could not be organised between conflicting parties (e.g. the hallway chat between Japan and China on the margin of ASEM8). For instance, in ASEM1, instead of putting the concerns about East Timor on the Track 1 discussion table, the then Portugal Prime Minister Guterres invited the then Indonesian President Suharto for a bilateral talk and only voiced his concerns bilaterally. This marked the first meeting between leaders of the two countries in twenty years. Also on the margin of the Bangkok summit, the Prime Minister of Japan exchanged standpoints on the ownership of the Diayu/Senkau Islands with his Chinese and South Korean counterparts in two separate sideline meetings. The same territory dispute appeared again in an impromptu Japan-China sideline meeting during ASEM8.

Another example was the bilateral meetings between leaders from Thailand and Cambodia on the margins of ASEM7 and ASEM8. Since 2008, relations between the two Southeast Asian countries have been tense due to border disputes as well as the appointment of the former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin as an economic adviser by the Cambodian government. ASEM did not only bring the Heads of government of the two countries to the same table but also gave them opportunity for bilateral discussions, which could not otherwise be organised. The editorial of the *Thai Rath*, Thailand's most widely-circulated daily, described the sideline meeting as 'a step forward' in Thai-Cambodian relations.⁴⁸⁴

The third aspect in which Track 1.1 differed from Track 1 was the regularity, and thus predictability. As illustrated by the empirical data, the sideline meetings were ad-hoc, unlike the ASEM summits and the major MMs which have kept regularity. Attendees of the summits could conduct as many sideline meetings outside the plenary room as they could physically sustain. In maximum terms, an Asian ASEM partner had a choice of fifty bilateral meetings. For an EU member state, its Head of State/Government could conduct at most twenty-three bilateral meetings on ASEM sidelines (with the ASEAN Secretariat, twenty Asian states and two non-EU European members). Yet, in practice, it was impossible and unnecessary to hold a bilateral meeting with every partner. Assuming each bilateral meeting takes half an hour, an Asian ASEM partner needs twenty-five hours to complete a round of individual meetings with all counterparts. Whilst the official summit lasts one-and-a-half days, free time between plenary sessions is rather limited. Government resources and priorities regarding foreign affairs also have limits. Therefore, the

⁴⁸⁴ Translated and posted by *Bangkok Post*, "In Media – Thai Rath Editorial", 28 October 2008.

choice of the bilateral meeting would be a combined result of a partner government's foreign policies, resources availability and political willingness.

Noteworthy, some of the bilateral meetings were unexpected. One example would be the impromptu meeting between the former Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan and the then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in the hallway after a session of ASEM8. Relations between the two Asian powers had been strained since September 2010, after the Japanese authority seized a Chinese fishing boat which collided with a Japanese coastguard vessel in a sea-zone which was claimed by both countries. Ministerial-level meetings and regular high-level exchanges between the two countries were halted. China also imposed a restriction on the export of rare earth minerals to Japan. The tension sustained even after the release of the captain of the Chinese fishing boat. The then Japanese Prime Minister Kan, who initially decided not to attend ASEM8, changed his mind in the hope of making contact with the Chinese Premier.⁴⁸⁵ There was speculation before ASEM8 that the Heads of the two countries would not manage to communicate bilaterally. Eventually, the Japanese Prime Minister managed to get his Chinese counterpart to sit down for a 25-minute talk to address the worsening relationship.

An earlier example of diplomatic breakthrough facilitated by ASEM was the aforementioned meeting between the Portuguese and Indonesian leaders at ASEM1 – an event that came as a complete surprise to the observers. For the previous twenty years by then, the two countries had suspended diplomatic ties over the East Timor question. On the other hand, some bilateral meetings failed to take place as expected.

⁴⁸⁵ “Kan hopes to meet with Wen in Europe “, *Japan Times*, 29 September 2010; “Wen, Kan hold talks to calm ties”, *Strait Times*, 6 October 2010; Banyan, “And never the twain?”, *the Economist*, p.38, 9 October 2010.

An example was found in ASEM6, it is anticipated that there would be meetings between the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi and his Chinese and South Korea counterparts on the sideline of the summit. But, finally, no such meetings took place. Significantly, the existence of Track 1.1 could be seen as a barometer of the relations between pairs of ASEM partners.

Despite their differences, Track 1 and Track 1.1 of the ASEM process demonstrate similarities. The most active ASEM partners in Track 1 (as identified in the previous chapter) are also found to be active in Track 1.1. Among the Asian partners, China has been involved actively both inside and outside the ASEM plenary meetings. Indeed, Chinese leaders have always been the centre of attention in ASEM. The claim of the existence of ‘Sinocentrism’ by Camroux seems to be valid.⁴⁸⁶ However, his suggestion that the other Asian partners performed merely ‘the role of supporting actors to this symbolic consecration of China’⁴⁸⁷ is rather questionable. Certain Asian states like Japan and Singapore are found also very active in both Track 1 and Track 1.1. On the European side, the media analysis shows that older member states of the EU engage more actively both on Track 1 and Track 1.1 than those who joined the Union and ASEM in/after 2004. Additionally, the host countries of the summit demonstrate extra activity during the summit they host.

Apart from gathering in the plenary sessions, all ASEM partners enjoyed the access to sideline diplomacy. All the Asian states covered in the empirical analysis had held bilateral meetings with other ASEM partners on the margins of ASEM summits. On

⁴⁸⁶ Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism” (2006): 26.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

the EU side, all the founding members of ASEM (the fifteen countries who joined EU before the 2004 enlargement) were found involved in sideline meetings with the Asian partners (see Table 7.14). Again, there were obvious differences in terms of activity. In Track 1.1 France has been the most active, followed by Germany and the UK. For the newer EU member states, only six (out of the twelve who joined the Union since 2004) were listed in Table 7.14.

Generally speaking, Track 1.1 was open for all ASEM partners, whose respective resources and political willingness determined the level of their activity. Although Singapore and Thailand were smaller players (when compared with countries like Japan and China), they still enjoyed the access to Track 1.1 to extend their diplomatic contacts. In addition, pairings in the bilateral meetings were not limited to partners of an equivalent size – smaller partners like Singapore and Estonia had meetings with China; Latvia met Thailand and also China; medium-sized South Korea met France and Germany as well as Luxembourg and Sweden.

7.5. Relations between Track 1 and Track 1.1

The empirical evidence illustrated the added-value of Track 1.1 to the ASEM process as well as the differences between Track 1.1 and Track 1. The next question addressed by this conclusion is more provocative: is this extra track constructive or destructive to Track 1? From the existing discussions which mentioned the relationship between bilateralism and inter-regionalism, viewpoints were divided.

Some ASEM partners, such as the European Commission and Japan, saw the sideline bilateral meetings as complementary to the official track.⁴⁸⁸ A senior official from the

⁴⁸⁸ Report on press conference by the Prime Minister of Japan on the occasion of the ASEM in Bangkok, 2 March 1996, <www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/asem/asem1/asem_302.html#13> (accessed 15 November 2008).

Commission stated that ‘openness and flexibility of the ASEM agenda is enhanced by the bilateral meetings and discussions between Asians and Europeans which occur at the margins of plenary ASEM meetings.’⁴⁸⁹ The *ASEM Infoboard* wrote ‘ASEM complements rather than duplicates the work already being carried out in bilateral and multilateral fora.’ An observer, Gilson, saw bilateral relations complementing ASEM’s official track, while in return, ASEM provided the EU with the means to promote ‘a regional balance between the bilateral relations of Japan and China.’⁴⁹⁰

Moreover, observers who saw bilateralism as beneficial to inter-regionalism also perceived that inter-regionalism enhanced bilateralism. Gilson argued that when inter-regional fora like ASEM handled more general issues, bilateral engagements could be more targeted and focused on specific topics.⁴⁹¹ Roe, who was in charge of ASEM affairs in the European Commission, described ASEM as ‘a continent-to-continent wide diplomacy dialogue which complements and enhances other bilateral Asia-Europe ties and contributes to better understanding of each other’s position in other multilateral forums.’⁴⁹²

On the other hand, some observers do not share the aforementioned view. Yeo saw bilateral relations, such as the EU-Japan and EU-China ones, as competitors of ASEM in terms of attention and resources.⁴⁹³ Breslin warned that the EU-China bilateral

⁴⁸⁹ Roe, “Towards the 8th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Beyond: Asia-Europe Cooperation in the 21st Century” (2010), 14.

⁴⁹⁰ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 318-19.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 312, 322.

⁴⁹² Roe, “Towards the 8th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Beyond: Asia-Europe Cooperation in the 21st Century” (2010), 16.

⁴⁹³ Yeo, “The Inter-regional Dimension of EU-Asia Relations: EU-ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process” (2005): 188.

relationship had loomed large and seemingly overshadowed the EU-Asia relationship.⁴⁹⁴ Fitriani argued that the competition among individual Asian countries to develop bilateral cooperation with the EU would jeopardise the inter-regional interaction between Asia as a united front and the EU.⁴⁹⁵ A *Korea Herald* article referred to ASEM as an ‘economic Olympics’ and an ‘arena of sales diplomacy’ while reporting on ASEM partners competing to secure business deals and to settle trade and investment disputes bilaterally during the Seoul Summit.⁴⁹⁶

The empirical evidence demonstrated that arguments from both sides have their validity. Track 1.1 serves as an alternative for ASEM partners who seek more tangible cooperation and exchange, which Track 1 cannot offer as a result of a combination of conditions – ASEM was not designed as a decision-making or legally-binding institution; ASEM’s membership and divergence in the members’ interests were huge; and the consensus-based approach meant that no action would be taken unless all partners agreed. Track 1.1 allows ASEM partners to go multi-speed, that is, partners could advance their cooperation according to their political situation and will. At the same time, the regularity of the official meetings provides ASEM partners with the opportunities to manage and even restore bilateral relations, especially when other bilateral exchanges have halted. The abovementioned China-Japan meeting during ASEM8 and Cambodia-Thailand meetings during ASEM7 and ASEM8 serve as good examples.

⁴⁹⁴ Shaun Breslin, “The EU and Asia Within an Evolving Global Order: What is Europe? Where is Asia?,” *East Asia* 27 (2010): 3-4.

⁴⁹⁵ “Indonesia Country Report”, *ASEM in its Tenth Year. Looking Back, Looking Forward*, Tadashi and Yeo eds (2006), 27-38.

⁴⁹⁶ Cheong-mo Yoo, “ASEM produces mass of huge business deals”, *Korea Herald*, 22 October 2000.

ASEM Track 1.1 and Track 1 do not only mutually complement each other, but also depend on the existence of each other. There will be no sidelines if the official summits are cancelled. On the other hand, the willingness of the Heads of State/Government to attend the ASEM summit increases when they can achieve more in external relations in one single trip.

Frequently, the delegations which consist of hundreds of leaders and government officials do not just travel to an ASEM summit to attend a single event. Conducting bilateral state-to-state business on the sideline has become a usual task of many participating states. Consequently, time and travel costs can be spent more efficiently. The reduction of separate state-to-state visits decreases the number of foreign trips, hence the financial and environmental costs. Also, national leaders would minimise their length of absence from home. Too much travelling and absence may induce negative perceptions among the domestic public, especially when the trips are not rewarded with clear and concrete results. Concomitant sideline meetings create room for leaders to build up diplomatic and personal relations at a slower pace and the risk of igniting criticism at home based on a lack of concrete results would decrease.

Arguably, when ASEM partners have to prepare for both the plenary and sideline meetings, attention and resources will inevitably be diluted. Within a government, human as well as financial resources for external activities have limits. Small-scale meetings, especially bilateral ones, which may offer more substantial fruits, can easily attract more investment from the governments. The competition for limited resources would be especially serious for governments who do not have, or are not willing to invest resources on external relations.

Notably, the empirical findings showed that smaller ASEM partners, namely Singapore and Thailand, did participate actively in both Track 1 and Track 1.1 of the ASEM process. This showed that as long as a government had the political will to invest enough resources, it could handle businesses both inside and outside the plenary meetings well. However, the empirical data also illustrated that bigger states such as China and Indonesia possessed 'comparative advantage', as more resources in absolute terms were available. The number of sideline meetings China and Indonesia held and the contribution they made on the official track were larger than that of Singapore and Thailand. Consequently, the restriction in resources could widen the gap between active and inactive participants. Partners with sufficient resources or willingness to invest the required resources could manage their external relations on both Track 1 and Track 1.1. Their choice of diplomatic tools, inter-regional, regional or bilateral, would be more diverse.

On the EU side, in theory, the European Commission as a common institution could have represented its member states in ASEM both in the summit and on the sidelines, so that government resources of the member states could be greatly reduced. However, the EU has yet been given exclusive competence in foreign affairs and security policy. In the pre-Lisbon EU, external relations were largely managed nationally by the member states despite the ambitions of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Before December 2009, the European Commission could not speak for its member states in ASEM, although it had a permanent seat in the process. The empirical findings showed that the EU member states which participated more actively on Track 1.1 were those with more financial and human resources. Smaller EU member states were at a disadvantage compared with larger states like France and the UK in terms of

external relations. Despite the Lisbon Treaty coming into force in December 2009, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has not replaced the national diplomatic services of individual member states but only complements them. While the policy areas in external relations under shared competences between the EU and the member states has increased, the principle of unanimity in decision-making remained.

In ASEM8 and ASEM9, although the Permanent President of the EU Council presented alongside the President of the European Commission, none of them have yet got the mandate to speak for the EU member states which were still represented by their own delegations. Furthermore, neither the office of the Permanent President of the EU Council nor the EEAS has taken over the role of ASEM regional coordinator from the rotating Presidency of the EU's Council of Ministers. Thus far, the post-Lisbon EU does not seem to have improved in cohesion or effectiveness in ASEM, while the coming summit is fixed to be held in Milan by the Italian rotating EU Presidency.

Notably, in Track 1.1, the work done by the EU and its member states sometimes overlapped. Many Asian ASEM partners held bilateral meetings separately with officials from the EU and those from the member states. For instance, during ASEM8, South Korea had bilateral meetings with Belgium, Germany, the UK as well as the EU. The then South Korea President Lee Lee Myung-bak discussed similar issues with leaders from the EU and the member states in bilateral meetings: ways to extend cooperation, promote trade and investment, the Seoul G20 Summit, climate change as well as regional issues concerning the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁹⁷ Also during the Brussels

⁴⁹⁷ "President Lee to attend ASEM summit next week", *Korea Herald*, 28 September 2010; "President arrives in Brussels for summit", *Korea Herald*, 4 October 2010; "Wen says Koreans misunderstand China's stance on Cheonan sinking", *Korea Herald*, 6 October 2010.

summit, Japan held bilateral meetings with France and Germany in addition to its meeting with the EU leaders. Thailand had bilateral meetings with Estonia as well as with the President of the European Commission. The talk between the then Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and the Prime Minister of Estonia Andrus Ansip focused on economic exchanges. Tightening the economic ties with Thailand was a main focus in the discussion between the Thai Prime Minister and Barroso. For the EU, its member states as well as their Asian partners, time and human resources appeared to be wasted by these duplicated discussions.

International trade negotiations are one of the exclusive competences of the EU. Further, member states have delegated competence to the EU in order to regulate the customs union, euro and common commercial policy. However, the above examples demonstrated that individual EU member states still attempt to promote national trade bilaterally with their Asia partners. On the other hand, while external relation is not an exclusive competence of the EU, officials from the Union frequently covered political issues in bilateral meetings with ASEM Asian partners. The same topics were addressed also in bilateral meetings between the EU member states and their Asian counterparts. Consequently, confusion could be created over the division of competences between the EU and its member states. It could also jeopardise the role of the EU as a representative of its member states, hence, weaken the regional organisation's *actorness*. The less consistently the EU represents the EU side as a whole, the less possible it is for ASEM to be purely inter-regional. A better division of labour is required on the EU side; otherwise more resources will be wasted.

Thus far, the interactions took place on ASEM's Track 1.1 were predominantly state-to-state. Being the most advanced regional organisation, the EU originally

showed a preference in dealing with Asia in region-to-region format. It insisted that the membership of the European side ought to be limited to EU members (until ASEM9) as well as the participation of the European Commission as an independent ASEM partner. On the sidelines, representatives of the EU (President of the Commission, Commissioners and Head of government holding the EU Presidency) hold a considerable number of bilateral meetings with the Asian leaders. The EU-China summit and EU-South Korea summit were launched during ASEM2 and ASEM4 respectively. Additionally, the EU conducts negotiations with the individual ASEAN countries separately on the fringes of ASEM summits. The bilateralism in Track 1.1, on one hand, is complementary to the plenary discussions in Track 1; on the other hand, it is destructive to the pursuit of pure inter-regionalism.

7.6. Conclusion

The existence of Track 1.1 in the ASEM process was found to be real and significant. In this track, the nation-state remains the primary actor. All the analysed participating states (China, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam) made use of the sidelines of ASEM summits to conduct external relations with other ASEM partners. Among these Asian states, China was the busiest on the sidelines managing bilateral diplomacy.

Track 1.1 was found mutually complementary with ASEM's Track 1. It provides an extra option for pairs of or smaller groups of ASEM partners to establish tangible cooperation. As a result, partners who are ready to move faster and closer will not be blocked from taking concrete actions. At the same time, the regularity of ASEM official meetings provides ASEM partners with the predictable opportunity to manage

bilateral relations, especially when other bilateral exchanges are impeded between two countries. For pairs of partners whose bilateral relations are already in good shape, platforms like ASEM increase the frequency of their encounter without involving extra human and financial resources. For some, ASEM is one of the few platforms that they can meet each other, hence, provides precious chance for relation-building. In sum, this extra track brings quantitative added-value to the wider international politics, which again complements the qualitative added-value brought by Track 1.

However, Track 1.1 poses a risk of overshadowing the official track: resources are allocated to handle businesses on the sidelines, which are proved to be more fruitful than the plenary discussion. The limitation in resources widens the gap between the active participants and the inactive ones in terms of commitment to ASEM. Those states whose resources for external relations were less adequate can easily fall behind in their engagement with other ASEM partners.

The empirical findings help revealing the content of the large-scale summits in today's international arena. ASEM is not the only inter-regional gathering on the international stage. What has happened on the sidelines of other summits, namely G20, APEC, Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation, is similar. As one of the many platforms for the partners to meet on the sidelines, this added-value of ASEM is not unique. Indeed, such significance is diluted as more and more fora are established.

While the number of summits and inter-regional fora proliferates, bilateralism has not lost its importance. Nation-states remained the key acting units in international relations, and they still manage most of the concrete business on a state-to-state basis. These multilateral or inter-regional fora serve as shelters for sideline bilateral

meetings. The handling of bilateral diplomacy on the sideline of a multilateral or inter-regional forum becomes a common practice in international relations. Subsequently, membership to these fora becomes essential: the states which are left outside will have one diplomatic tool less and miss out on opportunities to promote bilateral relations. This rationale helps explain the continuous enlargement of ASEM. Despite being perceived as a ‘talkfest’, ASEM still attracts newcomers who are unwilling to miss out on the opportunities the process provides. The activity of Norway in involving in bilateralism on the sidelines of ASEM9 serves as a good example.

Although no official document has specified its existence, ASEM’s Track 1.1 has developed alongside the official meetings since ASEM’s inception and has contributed positively to enhance the relations between ASEM partners. After examining ASEM’s Track 1 and Track 1.1, this research moves on to consider the unofficial tracks of the process. The following chapter explores Track 2 and Track 3 which comprise mainly of non-state actors.

Chapter Eight

ASEM Track 2: empowering the non-state actors?

8.1. Introduction

After examining Track 1 and Track 1.1 of the ASEM process whose key actors are mainly nation-states, this chapter turn to the unofficial track, or called Track 2. Its main objective is to ‘build a greater understanding between the people of the two regions’⁴⁹⁸ and to engage non-state actors into the process, subsequently to add a bottom-up aspect to ASEM. It is expected that an increase in participation of members of the civil society will help ASEM to improve its public profile and awareness. Noteworthy, the ‘unofficial’ here means that the key participants in Track 2 are not from the government. In contrast to the state-centric official tracks, Track 2 encompasses a range of non-state actors from business community to civil society organisations, academia, media, to the general public. In fact, most of the existing ASEM Track 2 activities are results from the Track 1 meetings, and they link to the official track in certain extent. Technically, they are semi-official rather than entirely unofficial.

ASEM’s Track 2 can serve as an example of the ‘track-two diplomacy’, which refers to ‘an unofficial, yet officially acknowledged and employed level of meetings often

⁴⁹⁸ *AECF2000*, 2000, paragraph 1; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM1*, 1996, paragraph 4.

within institutionalised settings.’⁴⁹⁹ Freistein suggested that the track two processes ‘encompass actors that share a common goal and choose a cooperative way to discuss issues; its main actors are academics from universities and think tanks.’⁵⁰⁰ She argued that such track could become almost autonomous (never completely though) from the governments and exert influence on government policies. The degree of impact relies on the structural conditions as well as on the ability of the ‘track-two actors’ to convey their ideas to the relevant decision makers.⁵⁰¹

When developing the concept of ‘new inter-regionalism’, Gilson suggested that new spaces were constructed in the ASEM process for the participation of non-state actors, who are not traditional actors in international relations.⁵⁰² Stubbs shared this viewpoint and stated that ‘the participation of previously disparate and usually unheard non-state actors may proliferate within interregional fora and serve to give any East Asian model of region an emphasis on social, not legal obligations.’⁵⁰³ Among various non-state actors, Gilson considered the business community and civil society organisations as the most important non-state actors in ASEM. She emphasised that the involvement hence the influence of different actors varied. To her, the participation of business communities was more welcomed and cherished by

⁴⁹⁹ Katja Freistein, “Beyond the taboos? The opportunities and limitations of Asian-European track-two dialogue,” in *Asian-European Relations: Building blocks for global governance?*, Rüdiger Jürgens et al. eds. (2008), 224.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 225.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 226-7.

⁵⁰² Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 141-72; Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 315-7, 323.

⁵⁰³ Richard Stubbs, “Asia–Pacific Regionalism versus Globalization: competing forms of capitalism,” in *Regionalism and Global Economic Integration: Europe, Asia and the Americas*, William D. Coleman and Geoffrey D. Underhill eds. (London: Routledge, 1998), 70.

ASEM partners because they held ‘the key to closer economic linkages between each region.’⁵⁰⁴

Many existing studies on ASEM’s ‘track two diplomacy’ focused mainly on the civil society organisations (the non-business, non-academic charity organisations which are usually mistakenly referred to as the only type of civil society actors).⁵⁰⁵ They tended to exclude the business community from ‘civil society’, while equating ‘civil society’ to the community organisations. Only occasionally that academia and think tanks are covered in these studies on ‘civil society in ASEM’. Many of these research pointed to the problem that the community organisations had been excluded from the ASEM process. Some observers labelled ASEM as ‘too elitist’ and ‘too bureaucratic’, albeit that the Track 2 was established.⁵⁰⁶ In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of ASEM’s engagement with the non-state actors, this chapter identifies all possible actors involved in Track 2. Furthermore, this chapter accesses the *actorness* of different type of non-state actors and determines whether ASEM is ‘too elitist’ and

⁵⁰⁴ Gilson, “New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia” (2005): 323.

⁵⁰⁵ Daehoon Lee, “Remembering a forgotten grandeur, ASEM,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2, no.2 (2001): 281-6; Gábor Holch, “ASEM, seen as a process” (M.A.I.S. Working Papers *Integration Europe in a Changing World*, Vienna: The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, 2001): 10-3; Gilson, *Asia meets Europe: inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 141-72; Simone Eysink, “Human Rights’ Dialogue in ASEM; Do NGOs Have a Role to Play?” (Clingendael Diplomacy Paper no. 7, The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, September 2006); Keva, “ASEM and Civil Society” (2008), 101-14; Bart Gaens, “Summary and Conclusions,” in *Europe-Asia Interregional Relations: A Decade of ASEM*, Gaens ed. (2008), 170; Sebastian Bersick, “The democratisation of inter- and transregional dialogues: The role of civil society, NGOs and parliaments,” in *Asian-European Relations: Building blocks for global governance?*, Rüland *et al.* eds (2008), 244-69; Tina Ebro, “Relevance and Accountability of the Asia-Europe People’s Forum” (2008) <ipdprojects.org/aeopf_site> (accessed 3 January 2009).

⁵⁰⁶ Lim, “The unfolding Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process1: Issues for ASEM III” (2001): 2; Yeo, “The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): From Selective Engagement to Comprehensive Partnership” (2002): 10-11; Yeo, “Dimension of Asia-Europe cooperation” (2004): 21; Michael Reiterer, “ASEM: Value-Added to International Relations and to the Asia-Europe Relationship,” in *The Eurasian Space: Far More Than Two Continents*, Wim Stokhof, Paul van der Velde and Lay Hwee Yeo eds. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), 17; Rüland, “Interregionalism and the Crisis of Multilateralism: How to Keep the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Relevant” (2006): 60; Bersick, “The democratisation of inter- and transregional dialogues” (2008), 254

‘too bureaucratic’ after endorsing ‘track-two diplomacy’ for nearly twenty years. Subsequently, this research explores whether the introduction of Track 2 could diversify the type of actors in ASEM, thus, on the international stage.

8.2. Track 2: 1996-2012

Thus far, officially, Track 2 of ASEM comprises the Asia-Europe Business Forum, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting, the Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation as well as a wide variety of activities organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation. An overview of each of these track-two activities is presented below.

8.2.1. Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Being the only permanent common institution established under the ASEM process, ASEF has a crucial role in ASEM. While no physical institution has been created to handle the Track 1 activities, ASEF was set up to promote inter-regional cultural, intellectual and people-to-people exchanges on Track 2. This section examines who are the actors engage to ASEM through ASEF and determines whether ASEF has helped the non-state actors to gain more weight in the ASEM process.

Singapore proposed the creation of the Foundation at the first ASEM summit. It was expected to provide outreach to civil society and the wider public so as to complement the official tracks. Alongside its proposal, Singapore offered a US\$1 million seed fund and the premise for the establishment of ASEF. The idea was welcomed by other ASEM partners and turned into reality promptly. ASEF was launched in February 1997 with four program departments: Cultural Exchange, Intellectual Exchange, People-to-people Exchange and Public Affairs. Apart from the seed fund from Singapore, ASEF financially relies on voluntary contributions from ASEM partners. It

also welcomes private enterprises and other institutions to support its projects or co-organise new projects. A board of governors is formed to oversee ASEF's work, which is in practice executed by some forty staff members in the Singapore-based office. Each ASEM partner appoints one governor from its country to the board. The partners always designate scholars, a serving or former senior government official as ASEF governors.⁵⁰⁷ The board of governors meets twice a year to review ASEF's work and set policy direction. Institutionally, ASEF is intergovernmental; it works according to the mandate assigned by the ASEM partner governments. In terms of finance and decision-making, ASEF is not an independent actor; instead it serves as an executive arm to implement ASEM partner governments' decisions in the social-cultural pillar.

Since inception, ASEF attempts to ensure that ASEM reach beyond pure governmental interaction. According to the official record, between 1997 and 2012 there were over 600 projects implemented by ASEF, bringing more than 17000 people to direct inter-regional interaction.⁵⁰⁸ In 2010 alone, there were over forty activities managed by ASEF, bringing over 500 stakeholders into direct inter-regional interactions.⁵⁰⁹ In average, around forty inter-regional activities are organised by the Foundation every year. These projects mainly take the form of conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and web-based platforms.⁵¹⁰ In addition, ASEF was

⁵⁰⁷ ASEF official website, <www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_contact&Itemid=160> (accessed 7 November 2010).

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, (accessed 2 November 2013).

⁵⁰⁹ ASEF E-Newsletters of January 2011, <www.asef.org/index.php/pubs/asef-enewsletters/1940-asef-enewsletter-january-2011> (accessed 1 June 2011).

⁵¹⁰ ASEF official website, <www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_project&Itemid=75> (accessed 1 June 2010).

mandated by FMM6 (2004) to manage the official website of ASEM, *ASEM Infoboard*. It also invites scholars from Asia and Europe to write on issues concern Asia-Europe relations so as to facilitate the exchange of ideas. The written contributions are published in ASEF-run academic journal *Asia-Europe Journal* (until 2011 as ASEF had sold the journal to Springer after an in-depth evaluation in 2011) or ASEF's published books.

Regarding the types of actors, except the business community, ASEF consistently involves different parts of the civil society into its activities. Still, some community organisations criticised that ASEF's participants were not pluralistic enough and questioned ASEF's ability to facilitate their engagement to the ASEM process.⁵¹¹ In earlier years, some community organisations and trade unions, who deemed the Foundation as the representative of the 'elite section of the civil society', questioned ASEF's legitimacy and authority to speak for the civil society in Asia and Europe.⁵¹² In response to these critiques, ASEF launched its *Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference* series in 2004. As an attempt to systematically identify the actors involved in ASEF activities, this research constructs Table 8.1 with information obtained from ASEF's official website on its recent projects.⁵¹³

Table 8.1 displays that a wide variety of actors, including states and non-state ones, are involved. Importantly, this research observes a discrepancy between the

⁵¹¹ *The Barcelona Report* (2004), 6; Gilson, "New Interregionalism" (2005): 316; Bersick, "The democratisation of inter- and transregional dialogues" (2008), 247; Keva, "ASEM and Civil Society" (2008), 110.

⁵¹² Sebastian Bersick, "EU-Asia Relations: The Role of Civil Society in the ASEM Process," in *New pathways in international development: gender and civil society in EU policy*, Marjorie Lister and Maurizio Carbone eds. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 190-93.

⁵¹³ ASEF official website, <www.asef.org/index.php/projects/programmes/archive> and <www.asef.org/index.php/projects/programmes> (accessed 15 October 2011).

interpretation of the concept of ‘civil society’ by ASEF and that by the community organisations. ASEF has demonstrated efforts to foster inter-regional interaction among the youth, artists, media and academia in Asia and Europe. In other words, the Foundation considers ‘civil society’ as a group of a wide range of non-state actors. In contrast, the community organisations seem limiting the group to only charity organisations, which differ from each other in terms of issue-area (they range from community organisations advocating children or women rights to environmental protection, charity organisations working on cultural minorities, animal welfare to farmers’ rights). Table 8.1 illustrates that these community organisations is indeed one part of ‘civil society’ to ASEF, but not the only part.

Table 8.1: Target participants of recent ASEF projects

ASEF programmes	Key participants
Artists' Network	Art professionals
ASEF Cultural Grants	Art professionals
ASEF Journalists' Colloquium	Media professionals
ASEF Lecture	Academic, policymakers, students, media
ASEF Youth Partnerships	Youth organisations
ASEM Education And Research Hub For Lifelong Learning	Education institutions
ASEM Education Hub	Academic, students
ASEM Rectors' Conference	Education institutions
ASEM Youth Dialogues	Youth
Asia-Europe Art Camp	Art professionals
Asia-Europe Comics Project	Art professionals
Asia-Europe Compendium of Cultural Policies	Experts, policymakers
Asia-Europe Cultural Partnership Initiatives: Film	Art professionals
Asia-Europe Cultural Partnership Initiatives: New Media	Media professionals
Asia-Europe Editors' Roundtable	Media professionals
Asia-Europe Education Workshops	Education institutions
Asia-Europe Environment Forum	Academics, experts, students, researchers, policymakers, community organisations cultural practitioners
Asia-Europe Film Meeting	Art professionals
Asia-Europe Forestry Experts Exchange Programme	Students
Asia-Europe Forum For Young Photographers	Art professionals
Asia-Europe Journalists' Seminar	Media professionals

Asia-Europe Lecture Tours	Academic
Asia-Europe Partnership In The Field Of Training	Youth organisations
Asia-Europe Press Forum	Media professionals
Asia-Europe Roundtable on Conflict Management	Experts, civil society
Asia-Europe Scientists of Tomorrow Programme	Young Scientists
Asia-Europe TV Documentary Programme	TV professionals
Asia-Europe Workshop Series	Academic
Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposia	Young leaders
Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians Meeting	Young parliamentarians
Asia-Europe Young Political Leaders Symposia	Young political leaders
Asia-Europe Young Volunteers Exchange	Youth
Asia-Europe Youth Camp	Youth
Asia-Europe Youth Co-operation	Youth organisations
Cinema	Art professionals
Conference Series	Academics, international organisations, community organisations, policymakers
Connect2Culture	Experts, cultural leaders
Corporate and Official Events	Academic, experts, policymakers
Creative Encounters: Cultural Partnerships between Asia and Europe	Artists, arts and cultural organisations, cultural practitioners,
Cultural Dialogue	Community organisations, policymakers
Cultural Heritage	Academic, policymakers, experts, international organisations
CulturE-ASEF	All
Database on Education Exchange Programmes	Students
Democratisation And Justice Series	Community organisations, policymakers
EMU Roadshow	Academic, media, financial professionals, policymakers
EU-Japan-Asia Journalists' Conference	Media professionals
Europe Asia Forum	Academic, policymakers, business community, media
I'mPULSE, Asia-Europe Music Camp	Art professionals
Informal ASEM Seminar On Human Rights	Academics, community organisations, policymakers
Pointe To Point, Asia-Europe Dance Forum	Art professionals
Publishing Programme	Book publishers
Regional Integration Series	Academic, policymakers
SEA-Images (Synergy Europe-Asia In The Field Of Cinema)	Art professionals
Talks on Hill	Academics, community organisations, policymakers
TV/Media programme	TV professionals
Visual Arts	Art professionals

Officials from ASEM governments are involved in some ASEF programmes, allowing civil society actors to interact directly with the policymakers. However, these activities mostly bring policymakers together with academia and community organisations in the form of one-off conference, roundtable or seminar. Under ASEM's non-legally-binding principle, these interactions can hardly generate any direct policy changes. Notwithstanding, they serve as an additional channel to link the governments up with non-state actors so that the later can express their concerns and views. The government side, in return, gains an extra source of information. Still, some observers pinpointed that such approach was lack of focus and lack of a clear status between the government and the civil society.⁵¹⁴

Many ASEF programmes indeed involve only a single type of non-state actors, such as the Art Camp for art professionals, Editors' Roundtable for media professionals and Music Camp for musicians. These projects allow participants with same background or profession from different ASEM member countries to mingle. In the long-run, socialisation among the particular groups (be it film markers, journalists, academic, young scientists or musicians) can be strengthened, presumably inter- as well as intra-regionally. After observing ASEF in the first decade, Freistein concluded that the Foundation had fostered the socialisation among the participants.⁵¹⁵ Yet, she warned that an 'over-familiarity' among the same group of professional might be built and cause 'boredom and fatigue rather than productive curiosity and thirst for

⁵¹⁴ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 56; Gaens, "ASEM as a Tool to 'Bridge the Cultural Divide'" (2008), 87; Keva, "ASEM and Civil Society" (2008), 110.

⁵¹⁵ Freistein, "Beyond the taboos? The opportunities and limitations of Asian-European track-two dialogue" (2008): 231.

knowledge.’⁵¹⁶ She also notified the risk of a ‘quasi-monopoly of experts’ and the exclusion of other actors.⁵¹⁷ Therefore, if a fixed group of individuals is gathered more than once, a collective identity may be built in long term; to trade off, this would limit the number of individuals involved given that financial and institutional resources of ASEF are limited.

The former head of ASEF’s Intellectual Exchange Department, Miss Sol Iglesias who was interviewed as a key informant, explained that ASEF’s approach is to strike for a balance between ‘new’ and ‘old’ participants. On one hand, ASEF engages certain participants to take part in a number of different projects, allowing them to build up personal connections and ties with ASEF in long-terms. On the other hand, ASEF expands its outreach to involve ‘brand-new’ individuals in new projects. Noteworthy, Iglesias elaborated that the nature of a programme would determine the ratio of ‘new’ participants to the ‘old’ ones. For example, joint research programmes between Asian and European academic institutions bring the same groups of researchers and academia together to work for a certain period of time. Public events like musical performance or art exhibitions, on the contrary, accommodate mostly new audience. She estimated that generally more than 80% of the participations in ASEF programme each year are ‘new’. At present, there is no exact statistics on this. No statistics on the distribution of ASEF participants’ nationalities or professions is available either.⁵¹⁸ It

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 236.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ With the help of the interviewee, this research accessed staff in the executive office of ASEF to check the availability of more detailed statistics. It was found that neither figure on the distribution of nationalities or on distribution of professions was collected.

is, hence, impossible to go into details about how diversify, both in terms of nationality and sectors, are the participants in ASEF's activities.

Through ASEF's work, different types of unconventional non-state actors, including academia, civil society organisations, artists, news makers and youth, from ASEM partner countries can mingle and socialise with each other. These activities contribute to the building of inter-personal connections and increase in mutual awareness among members of civil society from Asia and Europe. Regarding the impact on the weight of non-state actors, additional communication opportunities between non-state actors and the governments are offered. ASEF helps channelling non-state actors' opinions and recommendations to the governments. Therefore it can be seen as an 'amplifier' of the voice of the non-state actors on the international stage.

The establishment and continuation of ASEF symbolise that ASEM partners intend to go beyond the government-to-government diplomacy and engage with non-traditional international actors. Nonetheless, engagements of the non-state actors remain passive since participants are selected by ASEF and the numbers of participants are relatively small compare with the population in ASEM's forty-nine member states. Moreover, the Foundation itself has not developed into an independent international actor. It is initiated by ASEM's Track 1 to carry out actions according to mandate given by the ASEM leaders.

8.2.2. Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) Unlike the executive branches of the ASEM partner governments which are major components of ASEM's Track 1, the legislators are involved only in Track 2. The European

Parliament demanded for a bigger role in ASEM's early years.⁵¹⁹ Parliamentarians from both national and EU levels are brought together by the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) for dialogue. Initially, the occurrence of ASEP was irregular. Its first meeting was held in Strasbourg in April 1996, while the second ASEP did not take place until August 2002 (held in Manila). From 2004 onwards, it was made congruent with the official ASEM summits, and therefore is held biennially by the organising country of the respective summit. ASEP 3 took place in March 2004 in Hue city. ASEP 4 was held in Helsinki in May 2006. ASEP5 was held in Beijing in 18-20 June 2008, whereas ASEP6 was organised in Brussels in September 2010. The latest meeting, ASEP7, was held in Vientiane on 3-4 October 2012. Although being held in the same year and in the same country of the biennial ASEM summit, the ASEP has always been separated from the summit for weeks or even months.

In general, fifty to one hundred legislators convene in each ASEP.⁵²⁰ The national representation in ASEP has been patchy, for instance, only four EU member states and the European Parliament sent their parliamentarians to the ASEP 2. During ASEP 3, there was no legislator from Greece, Germany or the Netherlands.⁵²¹ In ASEP 6

⁵¹⁹ Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM," (2012): 153.

⁵²⁰ The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, official website, <www.na.gov.vn/asep3/www.na.gov.vn/asep3/documents/list%20of%20delegation%20and%20participants.doc> (accessed 1 November 2010); ASEM6 official website, <www.asem6.fi/EVENTS/OTHER_EVENTS/EN_GB/ASEP/INDEX.HTM> (accessed 1 November 2010); The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, official website, <www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/ASEP5/2008-06/23/content_1434635.htm> (accessed 1 November 2010); Federal Parliament of Belgium, official website, *Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership 6*, <www.asep6.be/index.html> (accessed 1 November 2010).

⁵²¹ The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *List of delegations and participants to ASEPIII*, 20 March 2004.

(2010 in Brussels), five of the ASEAN's ten member states as well as fourteen of the EU's twenty-seven member states had no parliamentary representatives present.⁵²² Among the participating parliaments, members from the European Parliament have been most active. It has sent delegations to each ASEP. Jokela and Gaens suggested that the European Parliament was the key drive behind the creation and promotion of ASEP.⁵²³

Upon the decision of the host country, representatives from international organisations (namely the IMF and the UN), regional institutions (such as the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission), ASEM partner governments and AEPF are invited as guests to ASEP. Participants discuss various issues within the three pillars of ASEM, and sometimes produce declarations and recommendations. They also come up with suggestions for ASEM partners, however, their views and suggestions have not been transformed into real actions thus far.

In addition, young legislators in ASEM countries had an extra channel to meet – Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians' Meeting (AEYPM) – one of the projects undertaken by ASEP. As its name suggested, AEYPM brought together younger legislators (who are under 40 year-old) of ASEM partner parliaments for a four-day meeting, allowing them to build up interpersonal ties as well as exchange views and knowledge on a wide range of issues. It began in 1998 (Cebu AEYPM1), until 2007, a total of six such meetings were organised by ASEP.⁵²⁴ The last AEYPM was the

⁵²² Federal Parliament of Belgium, *List of participants to ASEP VI*, Brussels, 26-28 September 2010.

⁵²³ Jokela and Gaens, "Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM," (2012): 154.

⁵²⁴ The 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th editions were held in Cascais in 2000, Bali in 2001, Venice in 2002, Guilin in 2003 and the Hague in 2007 respectively,

sixth edition, after which the program seemed to be halted. The attendees took part in their personal capacity rather than representing their national parliaments (or the European Parliament) or political parties. AEYPM usually comprised of plenary sessions and working group discussions. Similar to ASEP, there is no official mechanism to connect the conclusions of the discussion reached in AEYPM to the official ASEM meetings.

Significantly, the parliamentarians are treated differently from their colleagues in the executive branches and are involved in ASEM only in the unofficial track. Their gatherings cannot generate initiatives nor can they request ASEM partners to take obligatory actions. The involvement of the parliamentary members has been more about inter-personal connection building. Such arrangements signify that in foreign affairs, the role of parliaments is less significant than that of the executive branches. The differences in political system, hence the formation, composition and role of the parliament among the ASEM partners have to be noted. While parliament is a powerful monitor and balance to the executive bodies in some ASEM countries, especially in the more democratically developed ones, it has no real power in other countries. Moreover, ASEAN does not have an equivalent institution like the European Parliament to the EU. While the ASEM partners do not share a common view on the importance of the parliament, especially as representative of the general public, it is not likely to see a stronger role given to the parliamentarians.

8.2.3. Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) AEBF was initiated at ASEM1 to encourage communication and cooperation between the business communities in Asia

<www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_programme&task=view&id=27&Itemid=162> (accessed 1 November 2010).

and Europe, and eventually to increase inter-regional trade and investment. The forum is also designated for the promotion of business-to-government relations in ASEM. The business community received the proposal positively and enthusiastically held the first two gatherings in Paris (in October 1996, seven months after the Bangkok summit) then in Bangkok (November 1997).⁵²⁵ A core organising group member, Dr. Jacques Gravereau, described AEBF as ‘a private informal gathering of corporate leaders, economic decision-makers to strengthen the weak leg of the triangular relations’ which ‘focuses at economic and corporate interests’.⁵²⁶ Attempting to benefit as early-mover, Indonesia, in cooperation with Japan, organised an ASEM business conference in July 1997.⁵²⁷ The business conference duplicated the work of AEBF, and finally only AEBF was left to become a permanent part of the ASEM process.

Between 1996 and 2004, AEBF took place every year, including during the 1997/8 Asian Financial Crisis. Similar to the summits, AEBF is held in Asia and Europe alternatively, with the chairmanship being undertaken by the host country. The frequency of AEBF was reduced to bi-yearly after AEBF9 so as to bring the Business Forum in line with the official summit (Table 8.2). Subsequently, the host of the official summit also hosts and chairs the AEBF. The reduction of frequency was rather inevitable as enthusiasm of the business community diminished due to forum-fatigue (governments, relevant stakeholders as well as the general public

⁵²⁵ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 58; Gaens, “ASEM as an Economy-oriented Partnership” (2008), 36.

⁵²⁶ Jacques Gravereau, speech given at the *fourth ASEM Connecting Civil Society Conference* on 2 October 2010.

⁵²⁷ Pelkmans and Hiroko, “The Promise of ASEM”, in *ASEM: How promising a partnership?* (1997): 9.

become indifferent to various multilateral fora as a result of the dramatic increase of their number in the past two decades) as well as disappointment by the lack of concrete delivery by ASEM.⁵²⁸ A core group was formed during AEBF10 to increase the Business Forum's effectiveness to the ASEM process, aiming to make AEBF a Business Advisory Council⁵²⁹ to the ASEM leaders.

Table 8.2: Occurrences of AEBF

AEBF	ASEM Summits	Host city	Dates
AEBF1	ASEM1 Bangkok (1-2 March 1996)	Paris	14-15 October 1996
AEBF2		Bangkok	13-14 November 1997
AEBF3	ASME2 London (3-4 April 1998)	London	2-3 April 1998
AEBF4		Seoul	29 September-1 October 1999
AEBF5	ASEM3 Seoul (20-21 October 2000)	Vienna	28-30 September 2000
AEBF6		Singapore	7-9 October 2001
AEBF7	ASEM4 Copenhagen (23-24 September 2002)	Copenhagen	18-20 September 2002
AEBF8		Seoul	27-29 October 2003
AEBF9	ASME5 Hanoi (8-9 October 2004)	Hanoi	7-8 October 2004
AEBF10	ASME6 Helsinki (10-11 September 2006)	Helsinki	10-11 September 2006
AEBF11	ASEM7 Beijing (24-25 October 2008)	Beijing	21-23 October 2008
AEBF12	ASEM8 Brussels (4-5 October 2010)	Brussels	4-5 October 2010
AEBF13	ASEM9 Vientiane (5-6 November 2012)	Vientiane	3-5 October 2012

Key participants in AEBF include national chambers of commerce, multinational corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), economic experts as well as government officials from ASEM countries. When first designed, the Business Forum was supposed to include solely the prominent businessmen.⁵³⁰ Each ASEM partner government was asked to appoint three CEOs to the first AEBF in Paris. In the

⁵²⁸ Information from an authority source from the European Commission. See also *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ The idea is borrowed from APEC.

⁵³⁰ "Asia-Europe Business Forum Is For CEOs Only", *Strait Times*, 7 March 1996

successive fora, representatives of SMEs are also invited. The number of attendees has grown to a size between two to three hundreds, except in AEBF6 and AEBF11 whose attendee number hit five hundreds and eight hundreds respectively.

AEBF usually consists of two parts: plenary sessions with high profile business leaders and political figures giving speeches as well as working group discussions. Business leaders from Asia and Europe identify and discuss obstacles they face in common in inter-regional trading in different working groups. By the end of each AEBF, each working group comes up with a list of recommendations to submit to the ASEM leaders. Yet, the summiteers do not have obligation to response to or even to read the recommendations.

Noteworthy, there are different opinions on the strength of the business-to-government relation in ASEM. The participants of AEBF, who always come up with long lists of recommendation for the ASEM governments to endorse, appear to have high expectation on ASEM to deliver concretely. A senior diplomat who participated in the ASEM process commented that the recommendations from the AEBF received little reaction and implementation from the governmental sector.⁵³¹ Moreover, the Chairman's Statement of AEBF10 highlighted the participants' 'concern about the lack of efficient implementation of AEBF recommendations' and urged ASEM governments 'to vigorously step up their actions to this end.'⁵³² Also, AEBF has been requesting for an established communicated channel with the ASEM leaders, such demand is posed again in the Chairman's Statement of AEBF13.

⁵³¹ Pereira, "The fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit. An assessment" (2005): 20.

⁵³² *Chairman's Statement of AEBF 10*, Helsinki (11 September 2006) 2.

There are opposite opinions claiming that AEBF has been a key mover in ASEM's economic pillar. In an issue-briefing, Corporate Europe Observatory stated that 'AEBF has been given a key role, for instance in the step-by-step process of rolling back government regulations seen as "obstacles" to investment.'⁵³³ Trade unions saw AEBF as one key contributor to the development of ASEM's Investment Promotion and Trade Facilitation Action Plans. They noted that 'the draft IPAP was first disseminated at the first meeting of the Business Forum, and then edited to reflect the forum's views before being submitted to ASEM members.'⁵³⁴ Their background documents on ASEM also suggested that AEBF together with SOMTI were designated to develop TFAP.⁵³⁵ According to the chairman of AEBF7, Mr. Ib Christensen, 'AEBF provides a unique opportunity to influence the political elite as the recommendations from AEBF are highly appreciated in the ASEM meetings.'⁵³⁶ His colleague in the AEBF core group, Dr. Jacques Gravereau, added 'experience before showed that recommendations of AEBF were "somehow" transferred to the ASEM leaders.'⁵³⁷ In addition, Dent argued that the European business community was one key pusher behind the EU's acceptance to establish ASEM.⁵³⁸ Jokela and

⁵³³ Corporate Europe Observatory, "Asia-Europe Business Forum- ASEM's Corporate Bias" (Issue Briefing, September 2002, <www.tni.org/archives/asem-copenhagen_ceobrief>).

⁵³⁴ International Trade Union Confederation, "Working for the Social Dimension of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)" (Background document to ASEM Trade Union Summit 2008, Bali, 12-14 October 2008) paragraph 16.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Cited from Corporate Europe Observatory, "Asia-Europe Business Forum- ASEM's Corporate Bias" (2002).

⁵³⁷ Jacques Gravereau, speech given at the *fourth AEF Connecting Civil Society Conference* on 2 October 2010.

⁵³⁸ Dent, "ASEM and the 'Cinderella Complex' of EU-East Asia Economic Relations" (2001): 36.

Gaens called AEBF ‘a fully integrated part’ of the ASEM process.⁵³⁹

To validate the reality, this research compares the documents published by AEBF and the ASEM’s official documents. Although the role of AEBF was repeatedly confirmed by the Heads of State/Government in eight out of the nine summit Chairmen’s Statements, their recommendations were not acknowledged until the fifth summit. ASEM5 Chairman’s Statement wrote ‘[Leaders] welcomed positive recommendations made by the 9th Asia-Europe Business Forum in this regard [strengthening of government-to-business interaction in a closer Asia-Europe economic partnership], and tasked Economic and Financial Ministers and their Senior Officials to study the applicability of these recommendations and report to ASEM6.’⁵⁴⁰ The following three Chairmen’s Statements simply wrote that ASEM leaders ‘welcomed’ the recommendations from the Business Forum.⁵⁴¹ ASEM9’s Chairman Statement marked that ASEM leaders ‘encouraged ASEM business forum to proceed regularly’ and ‘welcomed the outcome’ of the AEBF13.⁵⁴²

After comparing the initiatives endorsed by ASEM2 (3-4 April 1998) with the list of recommendations submitted by the two Business Fora before the London summit (AEBF2 on 13-14 November 1997 and AEBF3 on 2-3 April 1998), this research finds that a few suggestions from the business community were materialised, namely the establishment of the ASEMConnect website and more SME centres. Reading the

⁵³⁹ Jokela and Gaens, “Interregional relations and legitimacy in global governance: the EU in ASEM,” (2012): 153.

⁵⁴⁰ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM5*, 2004, point 2.6.

⁵⁴¹ *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM6*, 2006, paragraph 21; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM7*, 2008, paragraph 24; *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM8*, 2010, paragraph 15.

⁵⁴² *Chairman’s Statement of ASEM9*, 2012, paragraph 14.

Chairmen's Statements of ASEM3 (20-21 October 2000) side-by-side with the recommendations from AEBF4 (29 September-1 October 1999) and AEBF5 (28-30 September 2000), several issues highlighted by the Business Forum, namely Information Technology and e-commerce, were added to the agenda of the summit. In this case, AEBF helps agenda-setting for the summit on economic pillar. Moreover, AEBF1 was presented the initial draft of the IPAP by the Thai government; the Business Forum was requested to add input to the action plan before it was presented to the second ASEM summit for endorsement. Furthermore, ASEM2 included the first direct dialogue between ASEM leaders and representatives from the Business Forum.⁵⁴³ Chairman of AEBF4 was invited to report the Forum's recommendations to the EMM2, the ministers then asked the SOMTI to examine steps for implementation of the recommendations.⁵⁴⁴

Additionally, a close tie has been developed between AEBF and the SOMTI. According the Chairmen's Statements of the SOMTI, recommendations submitted by the Business Forum are reviewed and considered by the senior officials on Trade and Investment. At SOMTI4 (11-13 February 1999, Singapore), the AEBF-Government Sector Linkage was endorsed to identify contact points from AEBF to be involved in selected SOMTI and other ASEM economic activities; to enhance AEBF's inputs on various ASEM economic initiatives; to bring SOMTI co-ordinators and contact points from AEBF together to exchange views on the AEBF's recommendations and how to implement them; and to give an account to the AEBF on the progress of

⁵⁴³ *Chairman's Statement of ASEM2*, 1998, paragraph 13.

⁵⁴⁴ *Chairman's Statement of EMM2*, Berlin, 9-10 October 1999, paragraph 16.

implementation of their recommendations.⁵⁴⁵

It has to be noted that the lists of recommendation from the Business Forum are always long, ranging from twenty to thirty-five recommendations grouped in five to eight different fields. Each AEBF gathers at least two hundreds participants whose business interest and concerns vary. While a biennial ASEM summit in average adopts twelve initiatives (which cover all three pillars), it is not surprising that some AEBF participants would feel that their recommendations being ‘ignored’ by the ASEM leaders. Indeed, some of the recommendations of the AEBF went into the ‘Major Generic Trade Barriers’ list of the TFAP.⁵⁴⁶ As the implementation of the benchmark measures is voluntary (non-legally binding). The same applied to the IPAP.

Since ASEM2, the business-to-government relations have been given a boost with direct dialogue taking place between ASEM leaders and selected senior business representatives. As highlighted in the Chairman’s Statement of AEBF10, interaction between AEBF and the government sector became regular.⁵⁴⁷ Frequently, president or a group of representatives of the Business Forum are invited to a session of the ASEM summit to present the results of their meeting. In the Brussels summit, a delegation of senior representations was invited to have breakfast with the ASEM Heads of State/Government on the second day of the summit. Similarly, a number of business leaders from AEBF13 were invited to breakfast with six ASEM Headers of

⁵⁴⁵ Chairman’s Statement of the fourth ASEM SOMTI, Singapore, 11-13 February 1999, paragraph 9.

⁵⁴⁶ *Evaluation of the ASEM Trade Facilitation Action Plan 1998-2000*, Part 2.

⁵⁴⁷ *Chairman’s Statement of AEBF10*, Helsinki, 11 September 2006, paragraph 9, <www.ek.fi/businessforums/aebf/en/AEBF10/AEBF_Statements.php> (accessed 2 May 2008).

State/Government on the first day of ASEM9. Although officials from ASEM governments are encouraged to join AEBF working group discussions, their participation is not guaranteed. The breakfast meetings between ASEM summiters and AEBF participants remain *ad-hoc* in nature, moreover, it is up to the individual ASEM leaders to decide whether to join these breakfasts.

All things considered, the role of the business community via AEBF was seemingly valued by the ASEM leaders. More opportunities are offered to the business community to express their concerns and opinions to the ASEM governments compare with other sectors in the civil society. Nevertheless, AEBF does not represent all businesses in Asia and Europe. For those who do not join the Business Forum, their role in and views on the international stage cannot be identified in this research.

8.2.4. Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation (CAEC) Concerning intellectuals and policy specialists involvement in the ASEM process, there was the CAEC, which actively engaged in ASEM's Track 2 in the first decade. CAEC consisted of a network of twelve research institutes from Europe and Asia-Pacific.⁵⁴⁸ Its main objectives were to encourage and facilitate greater cooperation among intellectuals and policy specialists in the two regions as well as to stimulate more discussions about the future of Asia-Europe relations. Conferences and research projects were established, which frequently resulted in written reports or books published and submitted to ASEM partner governments. Noteworthy, what CAEC had contributed

⁵⁴⁸ The CAEC was designed to be flexible and non-exclusive, especially in its membership, research institutes from non-ASEM countries are welcomed, for instance the School of Pacific-Asian Studies in Canberra, Australia, was a member since day one. Notably, the membership of CAEC is now congruent to that of the ASEM after Australia was admitted as a partner in ASEM8.

seemed overlapping with the mandate of ASEF, especially the Intellectual Exchange department. However, after ASEM5, CAEC appeared to lose its momentum. No more conference or research project was held. CAEC's website <<http://www.caec-asiaeuropa.org>>, which recorded and updated the activities and task forces' research results, was no longer accessible.

As an initiative from the Japan government, the CAEC's activities were driven and coordinated by a Japanese institution – the Japan Centre for International Exchange (JCIE), who also served as the Asian secretariat.⁵⁴⁹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London acted as the European secretariat of CAEC. The CAEC conducted its first plenary session in June 1996. Then it set up various task forces to examine issues of common concern for Asia and Europe. Many works done by these task forces were published. For instance, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward* provided a review on ASEM's first decade.⁵⁵⁰ The representation of CAEC for ASEM has been questioned in earlier years because an Australian institute was included before Australia became an ASEM partner, besides, some intellectuals from non-ASEM countries are invited to CAEC meetings. The rounds of enlargement to Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific, India and Pakistan in West Asia have basically solved this problem (if CAEC still exists).

Thus far, there has been no visible example of ASEM leaders taking the CAEC as policy consultant, albeit many recommendations were submitted. CAEC appeared

⁵⁴⁹ Japan Centre for International Exchange, <www.jcie.or.jp/thinknet/forums/caec.html> (accessed on 1 June 2010).

⁵⁵⁰ Japan Center for International Exchange and University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, *ASEM in its Tenth Year: Looking Back, Looking Forward*, 2006, Foreign Ministry of Finland and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <www.jcie.or.jp/books/> (accessed 4 March 2008).

mainly as a platform to foster linkage between intellectuals from Asia and Europe. As an attempt of scholars and research institutes to bring their voice closer to the ASEM policymakers, CAEC was not very successful, and this probably contributed to some extent to the discontinuity of it. It did not promote intellectuals (including academic, think tanks and research institutes) to be independent actor on the international stage. Yet, qualitatively, CAEC served to promote or even create inter-personal ties and intellectual synergy between the participating scholars.

8.2.5. Added-value of Track 2 Following the trend to include an unofficial track to involve non-state actors in international fora,⁵⁵¹ the ASEM process has developed a Track 2 which embraces ASEF, ASEP, AEBF and CAEC. Regarding the possible added-value of ASEM Track 2, Gilson saw it as a ‘*soft* channel of power, through which expertise is exchanged, ideas are tried out, information is gathered and political climate is judged’;⁵⁵² while other suggested that the track-two level dialogue was able to handle ‘sensitive issues which was avoided in track one’.⁵⁵³

In reality, the foregoing discussion indicated that ASEM’s Track 2 has brought together non-state actors who share similar background or professional interest, namely academic and think tanks in CAEC; parliament members in ASEP; and business community in AEBF. Participants benefited from the extra or unique opportunity provided by ASEM’s Track 2 to meet counterparts outside their country. Although ASEF is mandated to engage with as many sectors from the civil society,

⁵⁵¹ The development of ASEM’s Track 2 was regarded as an emulation of the successful track-two processes in APEC, ASEAN and ARF.

⁵⁵² Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (2002), 151.

⁵⁵³ Keva, “Human rights and Burma/Myanmar in the ASEM dialogue” (2008), 74; Katja, “Beyond the taboos?” (2008), 228, 234.

the cross-interactions between different groups of actors remain little. Moreover, interactions between ASEM partner governments and the non-state actors have been loose and little, giving non-state actors no additional influence on Asia-Europe relations. In sum, ASEM Track 2 has contributed mainly to promote inter-personal connections among the limited number of individuals who are involved directly in the activities. This is undoubtedly a positive contribution of track-two diplomacy. However, the boundary between such Track 2 and the official high politics is clear, while non-state actors are engaged only on the former. In terms of policy field, the non-state actors have mainly been involved in ASEM's socio-cultural pillar, except the business communities who fall naturally into the economic pillar. Demonstrating their discontent about ASEM's Track 2, some civil society groups formed their own ASEM meetings.⁵⁵⁴

8.3. An extra: Track 3

Unlike the aforementioned Track 2 initiatives, Asia-Europe People's Forum and ASEM Trade Union Forum are not part of ASEM's official track two. The founding and running of these two fora have been truly unofficial in the ASEM process. They are bottom-up initiatives, as responses of the civil society organisations and trade unions to the official ASEM process which has left them behind (if not intentionally excluding or marginalising them).⁵⁵⁵ Noteworthy, they have not been listed as part of

⁵⁵⁴ Rütland, "The European Union as an Inter- and Trans-regional Actor" (2002): 6; Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 316; Robles, *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The Theory and Practice of Interregionalism* (2008), Chapters 1, 4 and 5.

⁵⁵⁵ Richards, "Challenging Asia-Europe relations from below?: Civil society and the politics of inclusion and opposition" (1999): 160; Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 316; Bersick, "EU-Asia Relations: The Role of Civil Society in the ASEM Process" (2005), 192; Stephen R. Hurt, "Civil Society and European Union Development Policy," in *New pathways in international development: gender and civil society in EU policy*, Lister and Carbone eds. (2006), 117;

‘ASEM in Society’ (which refers to ASEM’s Track 2) in *ASEM Infoboard* until the official website’s 2012 renovation. On the other hand, AEBF, ASEF and ASEP have been always included.⁵⁵⁶ While the content of *ASEM Infoboard* is controlled by the ASEM partner governments (ASEF just manage the website technically), such a long period of excluding AEPF and ASEM Trade Union Forum from ‘ASEM in Society’ reflected their outcast status in the perception of the governments. Therefore, this research finds it more appropriate to consider them as ‘Track 3’, a distinct track from ASEM’s Track 1 and Track 2.

8.3.1 Asia-Europe People’s Forum (AEPF) The People’s Forum, which claims to truly belong to the ‘civil societies’, commenced in the form of Asia-Europe NGO conferences (27-29 February 1996) held in the same week of the first ASEM summit (1-2 March 1996), both in Bangkok. The conference was entitled ‘Beyond Geopolitics and Geo-economics: Towards a New Relationship between Asia and Europe’, convened over 350 people from a wide range of civil society organisations.⁵⁵⁷ The positive turnout and substantive dialogue gave the convenors a reason to continue organising similar forum. Since then, the gathering takes place biennially and in parallel to the official ASEM summit.

Carlo Filippini, “Beyond the Triadic World Order: The Role and Patterns of Trade and Economics in EU-Asia Relations,” *European Studies* 25 (2007): 154.

⁵⁵⁶ AEPF is included in the ‘ASEM in Society’ section of the new *ASEM Infoboard*; yet, it is introduced as ‘Outside the official ASEM process, civil society representatives from Asia and Europe have organised “alternative ASEM” meetings’. Source: <www.aseminfoboard.org/overview.html> (accessed on 10 March 2012). In the most updated version of the *ASEM inforboard*, AEPF is listed alongside AEBF, ASEP and the ASEM Eco-Innovation Center as ‘ASEM Forums’ and labelled ‘the human dimension’ of ASEM; while ASEF was listed separately listed on its own (accessed 2 November 2013).

⁵⁵⁷ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 59.

From the second gathering, it was named Asia-Europe People's Forum. Thus far, there have been nine AEPFs,⁵⁵⁸ all taken place in the same cities of the corresponding official ASEM summits, although certain Asian summit host governments were rather reluctant to host the People's Forum. Due to concerns about possible protests, Vietnam in 2004 and China in 2008 had moved AEPF5 and AEPF7 several weeks before the official summits. Similarly, the latest AEPF (the ninth one) took place on 16-19 October 2012, two weeks ahead of ASEM9 in Vientiane. Apart from the biennial big meetings, AEPF sometimes organises cooperative campaigns directed at some national governments.

AEPF defined itself as 'an inter-regional network of civil society and social movements across Asia and Europe.'⁵⁵⁹ It represents a coalition of multiple interests, brings forwards topics and issues which are ignored by the official tracks of ASEM.⁵⁶⁰ The organising chairman of AEPF1 stated 'we want to establish a new relationship between the peoples of these two continents – this is too important to be left to mere governments who have a very narrow focus of attention.'⁵⁶¹ AEPF aims at reminding ASEM leaders about the interests of the minorities, the grass-root and the in-need, which they believe are often shaded by the big 'international' or 'regional' interests. The People's Forum is also concerned that the ASEM partners, especially the

⁵⁵⁸ After the first meeting in 1996, Asia Europe People's Forums have been held in London (1998), Korea (2000), Denmark (2002), Vietnam (2004), Finland (2006), Beijing (2008), Brussels (2010) and Vientiane (2012).

⁵⁵⁹ AEPF official website, Home, <www.aepf.info> (accessed 20 May 2008).

⁵⁶⁰ Ana Maria Nemenzo, Speech of representative from the AEPF8 on *the fourth Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe Conference*, Brussels, 2 October 2010.

⁵⁶¹ "Sensitive Issues To Stay On The Agenda", *South China Morning Post*, 27 February 1996.

European ones, would only take care of interests of the transnational corporations and financial institutions, hence ignore the issues which affected the peoples.⁵⁶²

The scale of the People's Forum has been rather huge. Whist AEPF1 was a 350-people gathering, the following forum in London convened over 300 representatives from more than 150 civil society groups. AEPF3 created a record with 800 participants from thirty-three countries (ASEM consisted twenty-six countries at that time) attended. Starting from the fourth gathering in 2002, the attendance of the forum sustained between 450 and 600. Notably, the latest AEPF in Vientiane gathered over 1000 individuals from Asia and Europe. Although the trade unions decided to establish their own forum and left AEPF after the first two meetings, the scale of the People's Forum was not affected negatively. Still, the two fora work closely with each other: they produce joint recommendation for the ASEM Head of State/Government, organise joint conference, and attend joint meeting with ASEM partner governments.

An International Organising Committee (IOC)⁵⁶³ together with a National Organising Committee (NOC)⁵⁶⁴ are responsible for the coordination of the biennial AEPF. In the early years, the 'People's Vision Towards More Just, Equal and Sustainable World' was endorsed (in the 1998 AEPF and then revised in 2000) as the guiding principle of the People's Forum. In 2005, *AEPF Charter of Principles* was adopted

⁵⁶² *Introduction of AEPFI*, <http://www.tni.org/archives/asem-bangkok_aepf1996>, accessed 20 May 2008.

⁵⁶³ The ICO consists of Focus on the Global South, Asia Foundation (Asianhaus), Transnational Institute and Forum Asia.

⁵⁶⁴ Its constitution changes every time depending on who is the host country.

and became the guiding principle.⁵⁶⁵ The People's Forum membership and participation are open to all non-government organisations, regardless of their originate countries (organisations from non-ASEM countries are welcomed).⁵⁶⁶ For instance, the first gathering in Bangkok involved community organisations from Burma and invited East Timorese resistance leader (who failed to get a travel-visa to enter Thailand eventually).⁵⁶⁷ Moreover, Ecuadorians and Bangladeshis were among the participants in AEPF8 in Brussels.⁵⁶⁸ This reflected the People's Forum's endeavour to turn the ASEM process from exclusive to 'inclusive to all'. However, the legitimacy of the AEPF to represent the civil society in ASEM countries is, as a result, deemed even lower by the ASEM governments.

Although AEPF has consistently requested a linkage between itself and the official ASEM meetings (which is supported by many European partners),⁵⁶⁹ there has yet been any regular meetings or consultations between the AEPF and ASEM partners' officials. Recommendations from the People's Forum have no regular channel to reach the ASEM leaders. As Yeo suggested, 'governments are interested in financing the civil society but not dialogue with civil society.'⁵⁷⁰ Only occasionally that a small

⁵⁶⁵ It is available in AEPF official website: <http://www.aepf.info/about/charter> (accessed 20 May 2008), while no full text of 'People's Vision Towards More Just, Equal and Sustainable World' can be found in the website.

⁵⁶⁶ *Charter of the Asia Europe People's Forum*, <www.tni.org/archives/asem-docs_charter>, accessed 20 May 2008.

⁵⁶⁷ "NGOs Say Parallel Meeting Has Been A Success", *Bangkok Post*, 29 February 1996; "NGOs Produce List Of Recommendations To The ASEM", *Bangkok Post*, 1 March 1996.

⁵⁶⁸ Observation of the author herself from direct participation in AEPF8.

⁵⁶⁹ Yeo, *Asia and Europe: The Development and Different dimensions of ASEM* (2003), 60; Gilson, "New Interregionalism? The EU and East Asia" (2005): 316.

⁵⁷⁰ Lay Hwee Yeo, Speech on *the fourth Connecting Civil Society of Asia and Europe Conference*, Brussels, 2 October 2010.

group of officials from ASEM partner governments would attend AEPF or world meet with representatives of the People's Forum. The arrangement depends mainly on the decision of the summit host country. For instance, at AEPF8, a number of officials from the European Commission and the European Parliament were invited as speakers for some sessions and to interact with AEPF participants. Moreover, a delegation of the People's Forum had a one-hour dialogue with Belgian Prime Minister. In the most recent meeting, the final declaration (enclosed a long list of recommendations) was handed over to the Laos government, the host of ASEM9, who committed to share it with other ASEM partners during the Vientiane summit. Between ASEM6 and ASEM8, representatives from the People's Forum are also invited to ASEF's biennial *Connecting Civil Societies in Asia and Europe Conference* to communicate with other sectors of the civil society in ASEM.

The situation was found remarkably harder under an Asian host, many of whom showed antagonist attitude towards community organisations. As mentioned before, AEPF5, AEPF7 and AEPF9 were pushed to weeks before the leaders' summits. They were also located far away from the city centre to avoid potential confrontation or demonstrations there. Organisers of AEPF1 complained about Thai government's act to prevent the first People's Forum from taking place: the hotel booked by the organisers as venue for AEPF1 was asked by the government to decline the booking; and pressure was given to the organising group to call off or at least delay their meeting. Furthermore, the organisers found out that the Thai government had sent under-covered police to pretend as journalists to attend the forum.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ "Govt Calls For Help In Gagging NGO Meet", *Bangkok Post*, 24 February 1996; "Sulak - Govt To Collapse If It Stops NGO Meet", *Bangkok Post*, 25 February 1996; "NGOS Asked To Think Twice", *Bangkok Post*, 28 February 1996; "Campaign For Popular Democracy Meets", *Bangkok Post*, 28

Since their first gathering in 1996, the People's Forum has issued and sent their recommendations to ASEM leaders after every AEPF, but these recommendations have not been welcomed or channelled to the summits as those from the Business Forum have been. Only two among the nine Summit Chairmen's Statements (ASEM8 and ASEM9) acknowledged the recommendations. The fact that the two most recent summits have acknowledged the contributions of the People's Forum indicated a change: a higher recognition of the community organisations as stakeholders in ASEM. Yet, the increase does not mean huge attention was then given to AEPF's demands: ASEM8 Chairman's Statement wrote that 'Leaders reaffirmed that the parallel dialogues conducted within the Parliamentary partnership, the People's Forum and the Business Forum play a valuable role in reaching ASEM's objectives... Leaders took note of their recommendations and resolutions.'⁵⁷² Chairman's Statement of ASEM9 stated that ASEM leaders 'welcomed the successful outcomes of the ASEP7 held on 3-5 October 2012 and AEPF9 held on 16-19 October 2012 in Vientiane. They took note of the recommendations submitted by the two fora...'⁵⁷³

Apart from the distant relation with the governments, AEPF face also internal contentions. It embraces different community organisations which have different pursuits as each of them represents a special community; they come from different countries and different culture, differ in experience and in their financial power. AEPF is far from a single united front. The departure of the trade union from the People's Forum was an example.

February 1996; "Reporters Miss The Deadline By Years At NGO Gathering", *Bangkok Post*, 28 February 1996; "Journalistic Licence Has Been Taken Too Far", *Bangkok Post*, 29 February 1996.

⁵⁷² *Chairman's Statement of ASEM 8*, 2010, paragraph 76.

⁵⁷³ *Chairman Statement of ASEM9*, 2012, paragraph 52.

Although its work is ‘unnoticed’ to some,⁵⁷⁴ AEPF has brought civil society organisations across the Asia and Europe together regularly. This contributes to establishment or strengthening of network among organisations in national, region and inter-regional level. In this regard, two empirical research have assessed AEPF’s first fifteen years achievements. The first research was found by the author of this dissertation during her participation observation to AEPF8. During the four-day meeting in Brussels, a questionnaire created by Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies was circulated among the participants. The nine questions posed included: basic information of the civil society organisation which is represented; engagements of the organisations in the ASEM process (not limited to AEPF); purposes of the organisations’ participation in AEPF; evaluation of the participants on the responsiveness of the ASEM process to civil society demands; and assessment of ASEM’s success and failure. Author of this dissertation had searched for the results of this survey, but nothing was found on the official website of Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies thus far.

Another attempt was a research conducted by two scholars to undertake reflection and review AEPF’s first fifteen years on behalf of the People’s Forum IOC.⁵⁷⁵ Chenoy and Rutherford interviewed some forty key informants who associated with the AEPF in different capacities, including members from AEPF IOC and NOC, participants of previous AEPFs as well as officials of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of ASEM partner

⁵⁷⁴ Camroux, “The Rise and Decline of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): Asymmetric Bilateralism and the Limitations of Interregionalism” (2006): 27.

⁵⁷⁵ Anuradha Chenoy and Andy Rutherford, *15 years of the Asia-Europe People’s Forum A review and reflection with recommendations for strengthening for the future*, 2011, published on <http://www.aepf.info/component/content/article/35-resources/13-15-years-of-the-asia-europe-people-s-forum> (accessed 4 March 2013).

countries and from the European Commission.⁵⁷⁶ These interviewees reviewed AEPF positively and insisted that it was relevant to Asia-Europe relations. A lack of financial resources and the institutional design were listed as key obstacles for the People's Forum. The research concluded that 'it is difficult to calculate AEPF's contribution, but it is much more significant than it appears.'⁵⁷⁷

These two research serve as starting point for more empirical study on the role and contributions of bottom-down initiatives like ASEP on the ASEM process as well as the Asia-Europe relation in general. The assessment of other Track 2 or Track 3 initiatives will be a worthwhile topic for future research.

8.3.2. Asia-Europe Trade Union Forum Apart from AEPF, ASEM's Track 3 encompasses also the Trade Union Forum. As mentioned above, the trade unions were part of the first two AEPFs. They left and created their own forum in 2000. Key organisers of the forum include International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU), as well as the ICFTU Asian and Pacific Regional Organisation (ICFTU/APRO). Non-ICFTU affiliated groups from China, Indonesia and Vietnam also join the Trade Union Forum. German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) has been a crucial supporter of the forum. It organises numerous conferences to convene trade unionists in ASEM countries as well as the ASEM partners' officials who responsible for labour affairs. Apart from these conferences, officials from some ASEM partners would

⁵⁷⁶ No exact number was given in the report.

⁵⁷⁷ Chenoy and Rutherford, *15 years of the Asia-Europe People's Forum A review and reflection with recommendations for strengthening for the future*, 2011: 58.

occasionally meet with the representatives from the trade unionists under the framework of Asia-Europe Trade Union Forum.

Sharing concerns with the AEPF, the Asia-Europe Trade Union Forum stresses the social aspect in the Asia-Europe relations. It focuses on labour rights and employment issues. A statement listing their concerns and recommendations is produced and presented to the ASEM summiteers after every forum. Examples of their demands are a restructure of ASEM to reflect a comprehensive social agenda, the inclusion of social and employment issues in the full agenda of ASEM, the establishment of a trade union and civil society consultative body (a ASEM Social Forum) within the ASEM process, and a creation of an ASEM cooperation framework to exchange information on decent work national plans. Yet, none of them was referenced in the summit Chairmen's Statements or special statements issued.

By and large, the initiatives on ASEM Track 3 have not been generating ampler space for the community organisations or trade unions to participate in the official interaction between ASEM partners. Despite their efforts, recommendations from the AEPF and Trade Union Conference failed to induce interests among the ASEM partner governments. Certain Asian ASEM states are still sceptic against these two groups. Their gatherings are not only excluded from the official Track 2, but also unwelcomed by certain ASEM partner states. Moreover, the legitimacy of AEPF and Trade Union Conference as representatives of the ASEM public is questioned. AEPF, similar to the ASEM summits and AEBF, are meetings of senior members of the organisations. As advocated by Junya Yimprasert of the Thai Labour Campaign, the AEPF ought to offer more opportunities and support for ordinary people to speak

up.⁵⁷⁸ Another AEPF partaker Tian Chua, director of the Labour Resource Centre in Malaysia, raised another issue, stated that some of the participants of the AEPF did not really understand the ASEM process.⁵⁷⁹ Until the AEPF and Trade Union Conference can resolve the problems mentioned in the ongoing discussion, their role in the ASEM process would unlikely be valued by the governments.

In fact, the co-existence of Track 2 and Track 3 provokes competitions between different non-state actors to ‘get close’ to the leaders in Track 1, making the non-state actors too busy to challenge the central role of the governments. Community organisations and trade unions in Track 3 who speak for the grassroots stand in opposition to the elite groups (business leaders, parliamentarians, intellectuals, cultural leaders, arts and media professionals and etc) in ASEM’s Track 2. Thus far, little effort has been made to foster the inter-class (elite versus grassroots) and inter-sector (e.g. between AEBF and AEPF, or between the Trade Union Conference and ASEP) relations, except the four biennial *Connecting Civil Societies in Asia and Europe Conference* between 2004 and 2010. Existing endeavours mainly link up various non-state actors with the governments. This reflects the persistence of the central role of nation-state in coordinating interests of different groups in the societies.

This research argues that not taking the AEPF and Trade Union Forum more serious would be a missed opportunity for the ASEM partners. The diverse interests represented by these civil society organisations and trade union could widen the

⁵⁷⁸ Cited from Bhanravee Tansubhapol, “Hanoi hijacks a meeting of the people”, *Bangkok Post*, 17 September 2004.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

governments' source of information (especially for agenda-setting in multilateral fora) as well as legitimacy. If ASEM wants to develop further, it should connect these outcast groups to the official tracks.

8.4. The disengaged

In ASEM's Track 2 and Track 3, various groups of non-state actors are found, including business community, academia, art professionals, trade unionists, social movement organisations, media professionals and youth. There is a type of actor, although mentioned in the official discourses all the time, whose involvement in the ASEM process is limited thus far– the general public. In terms of population, ASEM now comprises 60% of the world's total population. This section explores the findings of two transnational research projects, *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* and *Asia in the eyes of Europe*, to demonstrate that a large majority of ASEM countries' public are still left out from the process. It is crucial to study the public awareness of ASEM because its official discourses have repeatedly emphasised the general public as one key component and stakeholder in the inter-regional interaction.

Three rounds of public opinion surveys were conducted in seven ASEM Asian locations in 2008, 2010 and 2012. They all posed the question 'Are you aware of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process?' to randomly selected members of the Asian general public. In total, the dataset included 9448 completed surveys. The sample size in the 2008 and 2010 phases was 400 respondents per country, sustaining the margin of error at $\pm 4.9\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. The sample size for the 2012 round increased to 1000 respondents in each country, sustaining the margin of error at $\pm 3\%$ with the same confidence level of 95%.

Remarkably, a majority of the respondents were found unaware of ASEM (see Figure 8.1; for example, 95% of respondents in the Philippines, 92% in Macau (China) and 88% in Malaysia in 2010). Only in the countries who have been hosts of past ASEM summits (Thailand in 1996, South Korea in 2000, Vietnam in 2004, and China in 2008) that the awareness of ASEM among the general public was higher (67% of the Thai respondents, 43% of Korean, 50% of Vietnamese and 70% of Chinese respondents said that they were aware of ASEM). Notably, in the two cases in which longitudinal comparison is feasible, Malaysia and India, the awareness of ASEM both increased by 18% between 2010 and 2012. More data have to be collected, both in terms of years and number of locations, in order to prove whether there is a wide spread rise of public awareness of ASEM as well as to identify the possible reasons for such increase. Nonetheless, an average of 68% of the public in the surveyed Asian countries remains unaware of the ASEM process after its existence for more than a decade.

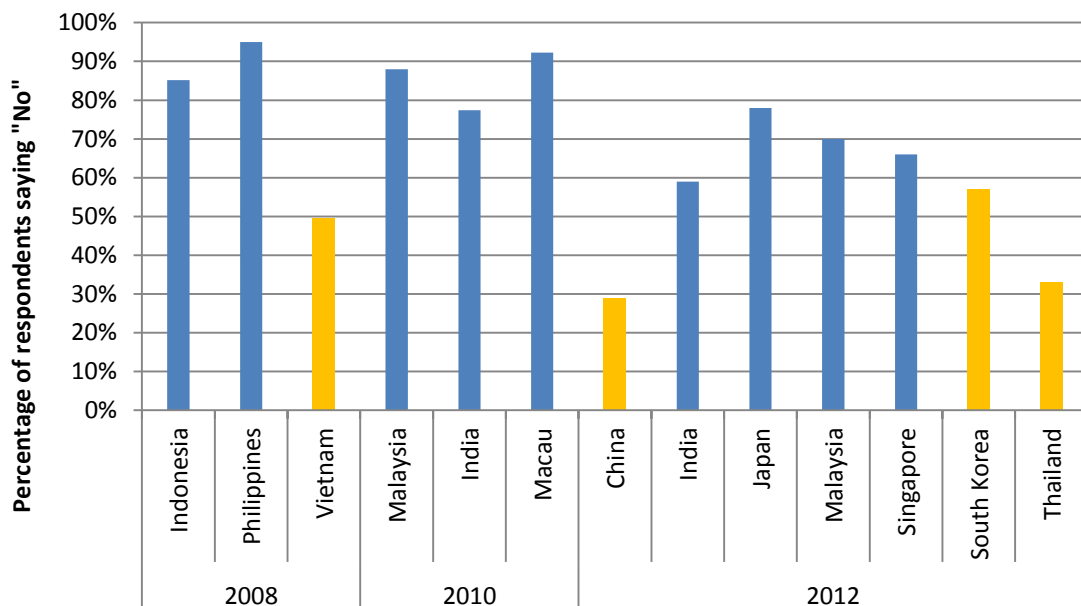


Figure 8.1: Percentage of Asian respondents who were NOT aware of the ASEM process. (n=9448)

This lack of public awareness of ASEM was echoed by the survey conducted in 2006 by the Asia-Europe Meeting Research Team of the European Studies Centre, China Foreign Affairs University.⁵⁸⁰ The survey collected 970 questionnaires filled by students from four prestigious universities in Beijing. In total, 22% of the respondents admitted that they did not know ASEM at all; another 69% said that they were not familiar with the process although they had heard of it (Figure 8.2). Even among the students who majored in International Relations, 16% did not know about ASEM, whereas 64% has heard of it but were not familiar. In addition, the survey found out that most of the interviewed Chinese students did not know about ASEM either. From the answers to the six basic factual questions about ASEM,⁵⁸¹ this survey showed that the students of the four prestigious Chinese universities knew very little about ASEM.

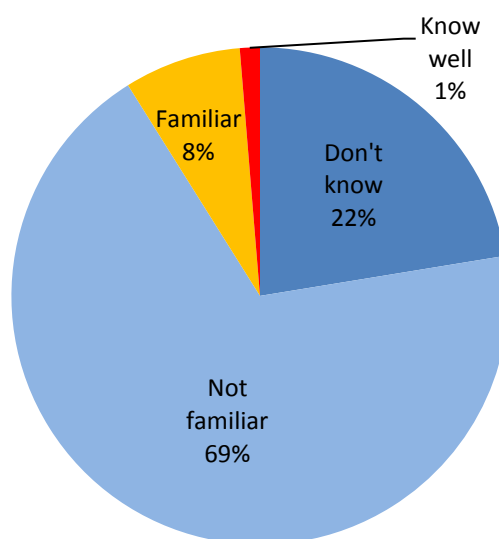


Figure 8.2: Answers from 970 university students in Beijing on question ‘Do you know ASEM?’

⁵⁸⁰ Zhu, “China” (2006), 4-38.

⁵⁸¹ The multiple-choice questions were ‘The first ASEM was held in____ (place).’, ‘So far ASEM has been held ____ times.’, ‘There are__ states participating in ASEM today.’, ‘Asia-Europe Summit is held ____ (time).’, ‘“Asia” in “Asia-Europe Meeting” refers to ____.’ And ‘“Europe” in “Asia-Europe Meeting” refers to ____.’

On the European side, a round of public opinion survey was conducted in February 2011, briefly after the occurrence of ASEM8 in Brussels, in eight EU member states. In total, the dataset profiled 6115 completed interviews, while the sample sizes varied from country to country to reflect the population composition of the EU. The margin of error ranged from $\pm 3\%$ to $\pm 7\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. The public opinion survey of *Asia in the eyes of Europe* asked respondents ‘How familiar are you with the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)?’ In average, more than 90% of the respondents from the eight ASEM European countries were either ‘not very familiar’ or ‘not familiar at all’ with the ASEM process (Figure 8.3). An average of 58% of the interviewed European public stated that they are ‘not familiar at all’ with ASEM. Despite its existence for one-and-a-half decades, ASEM was far from its European public until 2011.

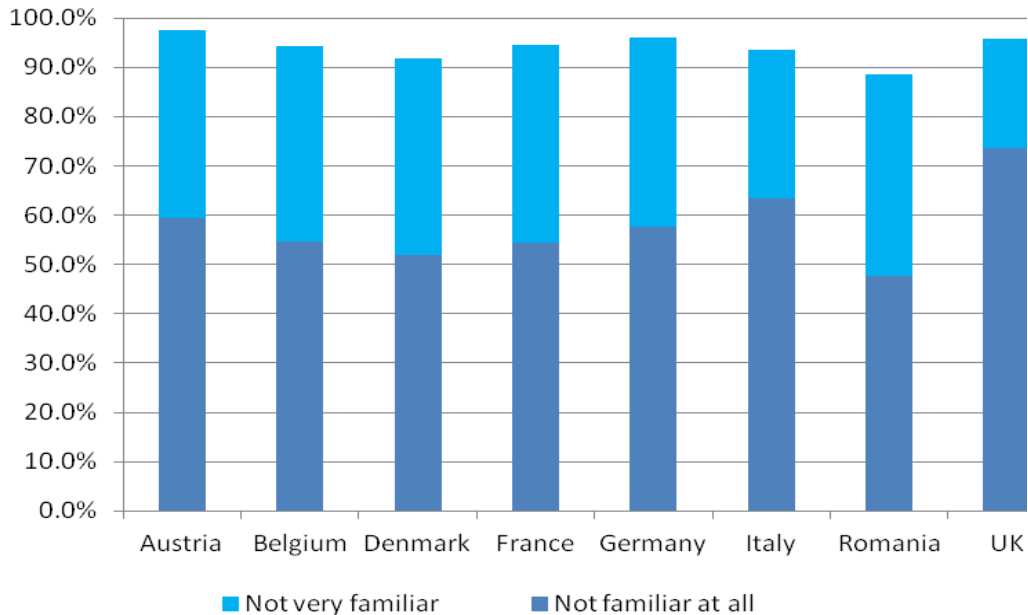


Figure 8.3: Percentage of European respondents who were NOT familiar with the ASEM process.

Noteworthy is that the questions posed in the three aforementioned research were different. Hence, their findings are not directly comparable. Still, results from these

public surveys all pointed to the same direction, illustrating how the general public has been disconnected from the ASEM process thus far. Although ‘enhancement of mutual understanding and awareness between the people from Asia and Europe’ has been emphasised as a key objective of ASEM, a majority of the interviewed publics did not know that the ASEM process existed, even though the process was created for more than a decade whilst those surveys were conducted.

Regarding inter-regional connections, findings from *the EU in the eyes of Asia-Pacific* as well as *Asia in the eyes of Europe* indicated the weak influence of the ASEM process on bridging people from the two regions (Figures 8.4 and 8.5). In the two projects, public survey respondents were showed a list of ASEM European/Asian countries and asked to indicate which of those countries did they have ties with (both personal and professional). Then, they were asked what kind of connections was it.⁵⁸²

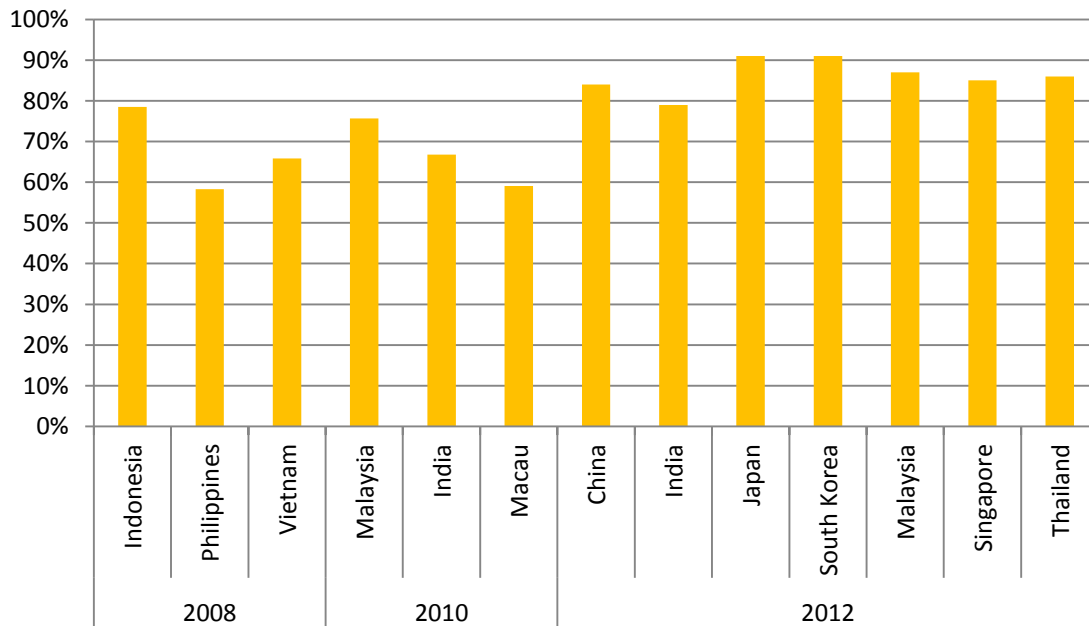


Figure 8.4: Percentage of Asian respondents who had NO personal or professional tie with any EU member state.

⁵⁸² Indonesia data was not application, for details, please see Chapter 3.

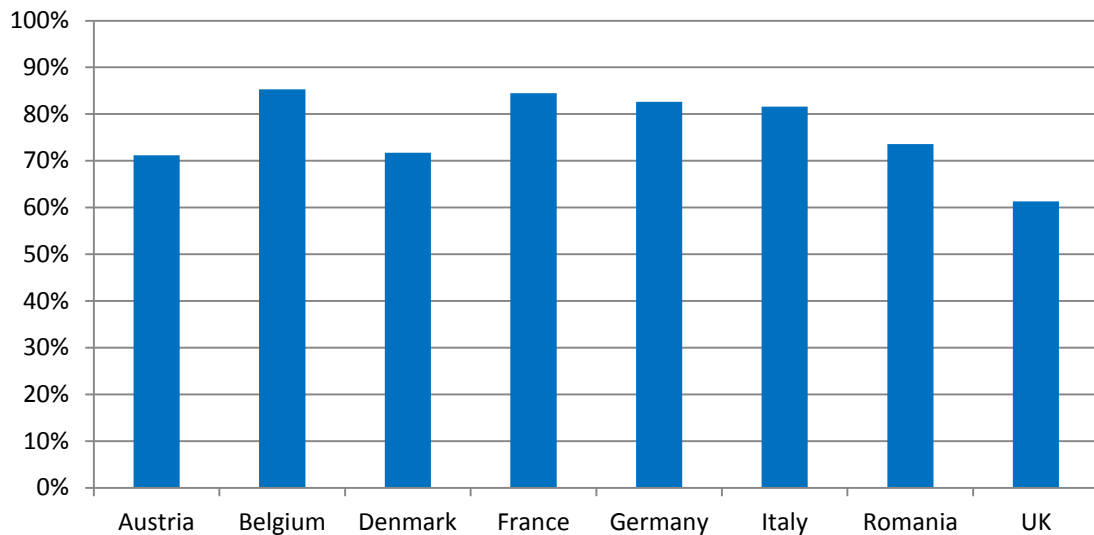


Figure 8.5: Percentage of European respondents who had NO personal or professional tie with any ASEM Asian member state.

After more than a decade of ASEM and ASEF existences, the inter-regional linkage at the general public level is far from strong. In the Asian locations monitored, an average of 78% of the respondents did not have any personal/professional tie with any of the EU countries. In the eight surveyed EU countries, the average was equally high. 77% of the European respondents did not have personal/professional connection with any ASEM Asian countries.

The results of Malaysia and India were also compared across time. Noteworthy, the number of Malaysian and Indian respondents who said to have tie with any of the EU countries dropped by 11% and 12% respectively. All things considered, the huge ‘lack of connections’ between the public in Asia and Europe revealed that ASEM and ASEF have a far way to go in improving the inter-regional ties at the public level.

Although a large-scale longitudinal comparison is not feasible at present, the comparison of the perceptions of ASEM between the general public and elite levels is possible. In parallel to the public opinion survey, face-to-face in-depth interviews

were conducted in native language with the national elites in all locations covered above (the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Macau, Malaysia, China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand). In total, there are 422 complete interviews in the sample obtained between 2008 and 2012.⁵⁸³

Among the elites from political, business and civil society cohorts, an average of 47% of the Asian elites indicated that they knew about the ASEM process (Figure 8.6). The media elites demonstrated a higher awareness of ASEM, with an average of 58% knew about the process. ‘Know about ASEM’ here included also those elite who were not familiar with the process and those who said they merely heard of its name. Strikingly, among the 422 respondents, only ten (six from Malaysia, two from Thailand and two from Singapore) have first-hand participation in the ASEM process.

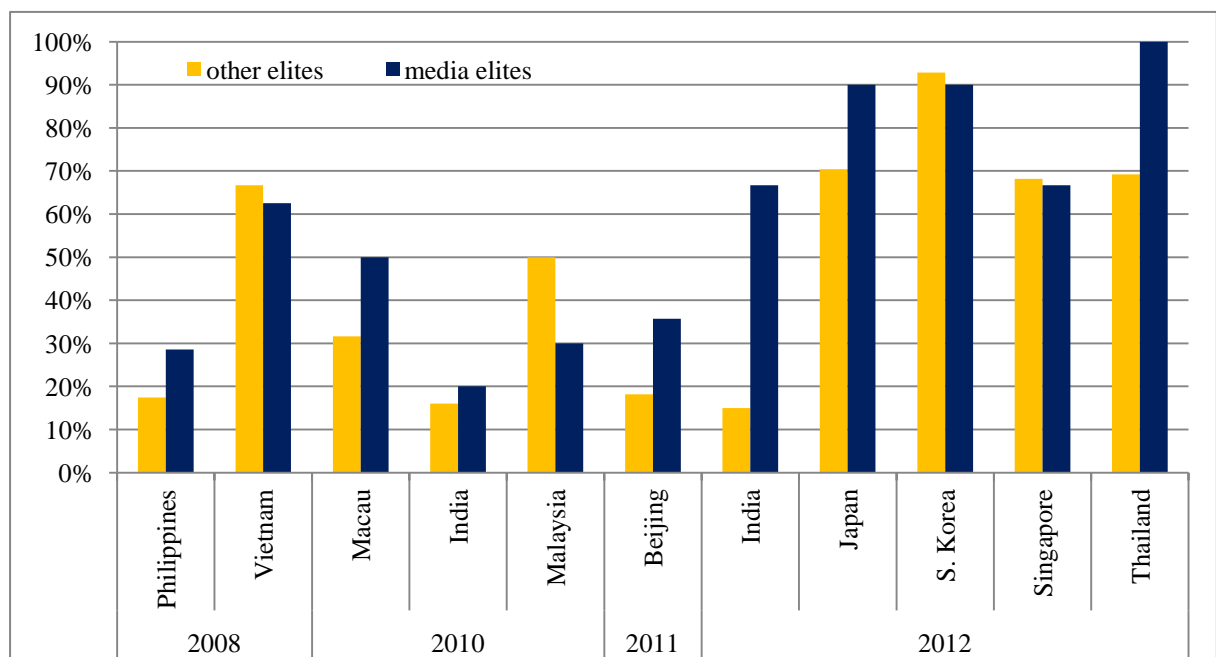


Figure 8.6: Percentage of interviewed Asian elites who knew the ASEM process.

⁵⁸³ It could be ‘have travelled there’, ‘born there’, ‘ancestors born there’, ‘have friends there’, ‘have family there’, ‘know people from there in your country’, ‘have business/professional relations’ or ‘others’.

Importantly, Figure 8.6 displayed the variations from country to country. The interviewed elites in the 2012 sample recorded the highest awareness of ASEM. Noteworthy, as there is no data available for longitudinal comparison except in the Indian case, it would be unsound to simply conclude that the awareness of ASEM has increased significantly between 2008 and 2012. If future research can use the same questions to interview national elites in the countries covered above, longitudinal comparisons will be feasible.

In the earlier samples, Vietnam appeared to have a higher awareness of the ASEM process, similar to the findings from the Vietnamese public. With India being a late comer to the process, the majority of Indian elites (except the media elites interviewed in 2012) showed lower awareness of ASEM compared with their counterparts from the founding members of the process. Although Beijing hosted the ASEM summit in 2008, it did not make the process more visible to the local elites. Yet, one should not forget that Beijing hosted also the Olympic Games in 2008, which was much more high profile and longer in time. With the growing number of international meetings held in Beijing, the one-and-a-half-day ASEM7 would be hard to stand out.

Comparing Figure 8.6 to Figure 8.1, the degree of awareness of ASEM among the Asian elites was higher among than that among the Asian general public. These findings confirmed that ASEM has been closer to the elites than to the general public. In addition, the elites (except the media ones) were asked to list their professional as well as personal ties with the EU and Europe. Figure 8.7 shows that very few interviewees did not have any links with the EU and/or Europe. Compared to Figure 8.4, the elites were much better connected, both professionally and personally, to the EU countries than the general public were.

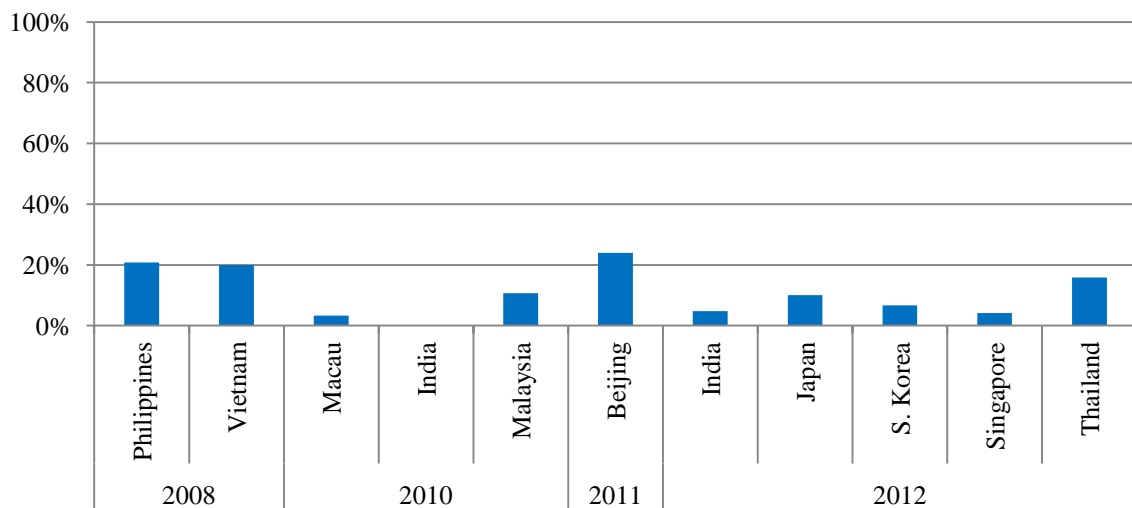


Figure 8.7: Percentage of Asian elites who had NO personal or professional tie with any EU member states.⁵⁸⁴

The above empirical findings show that the awareness of ASEM among the general public is worrying. The interviewed members of the public paid little attention on the process. ASEM seems to be no exception from Rüländ's argument about 'global and interregional forums are increasingly perceived by sections of the public as arcane circles of government specialists which have lost their connection with the grassroots.'⁵⁸⁵ ASEM has established limited opportunities to engage the general public directly. Among various Track 2 initiatives, ASEF is mandated to improve the mutual awareness and understanding between the people in Asia and Europe. Compare with ASEM's huge population, the 17 000 individuals involved in the ASEF activities until 2011 was indeed a tiny proportion.

Connections between the leaders on Track 1 are not parallel to the distant inter-regional relations between the people from Europe and Asia. The biennial

⁵⁸⁴ These questions were not posed to media elites.

⁵⁸⁵ Rüländ, "Interregionalism: An unfinished agenda?" (2006), 313.

summit is held regularly; the number of sectoral meetings at ministerial and senior official levels keep increasing; and the membership of ASEM keeps expanding. At the public level, however, awareness of and interest in the process remain low. Differ from the claim in the official discourses, the public has not appeared to be the central part of the ASEM process. Government officials and elites maintain their unique access to high politics at international level. ASEM remains a top-down process where the general public does not play any decisive role. While ASEM are affecting the general public in various way (such as extra public holidays or road closure when their countries host an ASEM summit or MMs, use of the tax payers' money to sponsor ASEM activities, and *ad-hoc* inter-regional exchanges opportunities for university students and academia), the public can hardly influence the activities at summit or ministerial levels. In comparison to the general public, the national elites are more involved in the ASEM process. However, the engagement is still limited to a small number of national elites.

8.5. Conclusion

Although the ASEM process encompassing unofficial tracks to involve non-state actors, it has not really promoted the role of the non-state actors in international relations. The inclusion of members from the civil society has been a controlled one. The comment made by Richards in 2004 that 'while many ASEM member states do acknowledge that civil society has a role to play in interregional relations, most avoid the full implications of this for the deepening of civil participation' still holds true.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁶ Gareth A. Richards, "The Promise and Limits of Civil Society Engagement in Asia-Europe Relations," *ASEM Research Platform Newsbrief* (2004), 8, cited in Bersick, "EU-Asia Relations: The Role of Civil Society in the ASEM Process" (2006), 193.

Applying Bersick's terminology, the 'democratisation of inter-regional dialogue' (a process that allows civil society to participate in the politics of inter-regional relations)⁵⁸⁷ within ASEM remains shallow.

Among various kinds of non-state actors, the engagement with the business community was found more valued by ASEM leaders. Their importance is acknowledged in every ASEM summit Chairman's Statement; AEBF's recommendations are channelled to the officials, with some of the recommendations adopted; and groups of senior business leaders were invited to direct meeting with ASEM Heads of State/Government. In contrast, participations of other non-state actors like academics, media and social movement organisations appeared less valued. In particular, civil society organisations and trade unionists have been less concerned by the officially admitted Track 2. Subsequently, they formed the 'Track 3' of the ASEM process, a truly unofficial track. Such track offers the community organisations and trade unions across Asia and Europe to network and establish cooperation among themselves, albeit direct impact that they could exert on the policy-makers remain limited.

Even in Track 2, direct influence of the engaged non-state actors on the policy-making of ASEM countries is limited. The linkage between these non-state actors and the ASEM official track is rather minimal. Adding the fact that ASEM is not a multilateral negotiation platform or delivery mechanism, the involvement of the non-state actors in Track 2 has not enabled them to be more influential on the international stage.

⁵⁸⁷ Bersick, "EU-Asia Relations: The Role of Civil Society in the ASEM Process" (2006), 192-4.

The empirical data revealed that the general public has not been at the core of the relationship building among in the ASEM process. The actual actions taken by the ASEM partners did not promote a bottom-up approach or a mass involvement of the general public. The above findings correspond to the critique of ASEM of being elitist. It focuses on the government-to-government and business-to-government relations. Sectors from the civil society which gain access to the process are mostly the 'elites'—senior business executives in the AEBF, academics and university students, think tanks, senior media professionals in ASEF's activities and exchange programmes, law-makers in the ASEP, as well as research experts, academia and think tanks in CAEC and ASEF. The majority of the surveyed general public is not even aware of the existence of ASEM. The interaction in the ASEM process remains a reserved high politics in which the domestic public are largely irrelevant.

All in all, ASEM's Track 2 and Track 3 managed to include several types of non-state actors, but did not enable them with decisive powers in international relations. None of the abovementioned non-state groups exert direct influence on the action of the ASEM partner governments. The inclusion of these non-state actors can be more appropriately understood as a product from ASEM partner governments' public diplomacy to increase legitimacy of the process. Track 2 initiatives namely AEBF and ASEF can serve the governments' as new supporting networks. In the selection of 'supporters', ASEM partners demonstrated their preference on the business community and the more elitist part of the civil society to the community organisations and trade unions. This differentiation of treatment to different groups of non-state actor has negative impacts. The legitimacy of both ASEM and its Track 2 is questioned. Also, antagonistic feeling among the outcast groups towards the governments and towards the groups of actors which are favoured inevitably grows.

To truly go beyond the governments and include all sector of the society in relation building between Asia and Europe, ASEM partners need to reconsider their engagement with the actors in Track 3. Also, interaction between different types of actor (namely between the business community and the community organisations, or between academic and parliamentarians) should also be better promoted. Last but not least, a bigger part of the general public should be involved directly if the inter-regional Asia-Europe relation wants to become truly substantial.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: True potential of ASEM

9.1. Special and novel findings of this research

This doctoral research determines how the rise of inter-regionalism influences the actors in the international arena and vice-versa. It is found that owing to a lack of attention to the type of actors involved, many existing studies failed to account accurately for the functions and development of inter-regionalism in general and ASEM in particular. Hence, this research redirects the focus to the correlation between the development of inter-regionalism, with ASEM serves as a case-study, and the types of international actors involved. By identifying the key actors in ASEM and examining how they utilise ASEM as one of their diplomatic tools, this research clarifies the misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations of the process, and hence of inter-regionalism. Subsequently, the true potential of ASEM and other inter-regional fora are illustrated.

9.1.1. Beyond the dual-track approach As demonstrated in chapters 6, 7 and 8, the ASEM process is more comprehensive than many scholars have previously framed it: it is more than the biennial summits and more than two tracks. Since 1996, ASEM has grown in breadth as well as depth. In Track 1, the process has developed from the biennial summit to involve a great number of ministerial and senior officials' meetings. The policy field have expanded to a wide range of sectors. Due to ASEM's institutional design, the Track 1 meetings do not generate any legally-binding

obligation, yet, the sectoral MMs and SOMs allow ASEM partner governments to exchange governing experience, to share and explore best practices in the respective policy field. This state-centric Track 1 dominates the decision-making of ASEM. Thus far, ASEM member states have not given the process more influence in their domestic affairs but retain it mainly as an information exchange platform.

On the fringes of the Track 1 meetings, an unplanned Track 1.1 has flourished and provided ASEM partners with an additional channel to maximise diplomatic accomplishments and handle ‘private’ affairs in smaller groups. The existence and added-value of this special track are overlooked by most observers. This research suggests that the Track 1.1, albeit being a by-product, has been one of ASEM’s most practical contributions to international relations. The empirical evidences show that in Asia-Europe relation, bilateral state-to-state interaction remains the most entrusted and familiar form of external relation management. Inter-regional fora like ASEM have not reduced the conventional dependence on bilateralism, especially those between the big states, which forms the basis of international relations. ASEM partners turn to bilateralism when more concrete cooperation or affairs have to be handled. In contrast, they do not regard the inter-regional plenary as a platform for tangible delivery. In the foreseeable future, inter-regionalism can hardly replace bilateralism, unless nation-states are willing to hangover their power in external relations to the regional institutions which they belong to; in other words, unless regional organisations obtain sufficient *actorness*.

Unlike Track 1 in which each ASEM partner has an equal weight, Track 1.1 benefits the partners differently. The host country is always the largest beneficial. Also, partners who are richer in terms of resources in foreign affairs (regardless of the size

of the country) appear to be more capable to utilise such additional diplomatic platform. Notably, for states with limited diplomatic resources, it can be a unique opportunity to establish bilateral ties with certain partners.

This research proved that ASEM Track 1.1 favoured ‘inter-regional’ state-to-state interactions more than ‘intra-regional’ ones. It is especially the case for the EU partners, whose intra-regional tie has been much closer and seem more interested in meeting partners from Asia. Additionally, this rationalisation of international relations contributes to the reduction of time, resources and carbon emission for the partner governments. Arguably, small states who have relatively less resource available for external relations and whose influence on international relations is relatively small, benefit more. They are brought to the same discussion table with the bigger powers. As the additional cost to hold a sideline bilateral state-to-state meeting is low, smaller countries gain opportunities to develop more bilateral relations, especially with other small states (for example, Singapore-Belgium, Singapore-Luxembourg, Thailand-Estonia and Thailand-Latvia meetings took place on the fringe of the official summits, Table 7.2 and Table 7.13).

While Track 1 and Track 1.1 are mainly state-to-state interactions, the introduction of track-two diplomacy is expected to engage the non-state actors. When exploring the role of various types of non-state actors in ASEM, this research differs from other studies which feature only one unofficial track. It distinguishes between the Track 2 which is recognised by the official ASEM process and a Track 3 which is not. Indeed, the different treatments towards different types of non-state actors illustrated by this research confirm that a controlled inclusion existed in ASEM’s track-two diplomacy. ASEM’s Track 2 and Track 3 have not fostered the role of the non-state actors or

given rise to any new international actor. Although the non-state actors attempt to project their voice to and influence the governments, ASEM remain very much a top-down process. Also, the empirical findings demonstrate that the general public has been largely detached from the process. Positively, the Track 2 and Track 3 gatherings do provide individuals from ASEM countries to build people-to-people connection and exchange expertise, both intra-regionally and inter-regionally.

Furthermore, the boundaries between these tracks are found to be rigid; communications between actors from different tracks or levels have been limited. This research suggests that the overlooked cross-track interaction can actually bring added-value to the ASEM process.

9.1.2. Inter-regionalism not for regions but nation-states In sum, ASEM embraces four tracks to shelter various types of actors who interact differently. Nonetheless, the process has hardly contributed to the redistribution of power between state and non-state actors. The empirical data shows that little additional space was created for non-state actors to influence international relations. In Track 1, the state-centric hierarchy is obvious. The Head of State/Government summit gathers the top decision-makers, while the ministers and their senior officials act according to the instructions set by the summiters. Occasionally, experts from special areas are invited to form taskforces of eminent persons to work on given topics. They then report their results to the corresponding SOMs. In Track 2 and Track 3, business community, parliamentarians, academics, research experts, think tanks and civil society organisations regularly submit their recommendations to the SOMs, MMs and summits via the Asia-Europe Business Forum, Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership, Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation, Asia-Europe Foundation, Asia-Europe People's

Forum and Asia-Europe Trade Union Forum. These recommendations are filtered first by the SOMs, then by the MMs before reaching the summits. In this hierarchy, the non-state actors are left on the periphery, passively controlled by the states. They exert little influence on relation-building among ASEM partners. Although a new type of interaction, inter-regionalism, has been established, the primary actor in international relations remains the nation-state.

Noteworthy, not every partner government has acted in the same way in ASEM. Both in the plenary meetings and bilateral meetings on the sideline, several partners are obviously more active than others. The list of these active ASEM partners in Track 1 is identical to that of Track 1.1. China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam are found on the Asian side; while Germany, the European Commission and Denmark are on the EU side. This difference in activity actually mirrors wider international relations where certain states are more active and more capable in managing external relations. This research suggests that such differences are caused by a combination of factors including differences in national interest, preferences in diplomatic tools, the availability of diplomatic resources, and geopolitics. However, the degree of relevancy of each factor to each partner varies. Future research are encouraged to go beyond the findings here and determine how each of these causal factors influences ASEM partners' activity in different ASEM tracks.

Moreover, it is illustrated that ASEM will not become purely inter-regional in the foreseeable future; therefore, the process cannot deliver the functions expected for pure inter-regionalism, namely, power-balancing or bandwagoning between regions, formation of a layer of global governance, coordination of position between regions before multilateral fora and agenda-setting for multilateral fora. Thus far, ASEM has

not been a region-to-region interaction. The continuous rounds of enlargement already signify the incompleteness of 'Asia' and 'Europe' in ASEM. In particular, the 2010 admission of Russia, Australia and New Zealand and the 2012 admission of Norway and Switzerland induce controversy over the definition of 'Asia' and 'Europe' as well as the legitimacy of the EU to represent 'Europe'. Furthermore, neither the Asian nor the European side speaks or acts as one united bloc. The key acting agents are the nation-states, while the active participation of the European Commission (whose legitimacy to participate in ASEM remains questionable) is an exceptional case. The empirical analysis shows that no regional actor in ASEM possesses sufficient *actorness* to replace its constituent member states, although many aforementioned existing studies have taken regions or regional organisations as independent actors for granted. The current 'Asia-Europe Meeting' is better described as a meeting between a group of nation-states in Asia and a group of nation-states in Europe.

ASEM was never designed to function as a delivery or decision-making mechanism. Lacking the institutional tool and willingness of the participants to commit bindingly, the process has not been producing most of the results predicted by other scholars who applied different IR theories. Thus far, no empirical finding was found to support the claims that ASEM could bring partners material gains, foster intra-regional institutional building or prevent unilateral behaviour of hegemons. On the other hand, the empirical analysis suggests that the key contributions of ASEM are information and views updates between participants in Track 1; provision of an additional venue, Track 1.1, for partners to conduct external relations; and bringing groups of non-state actors with similar interests together promoting socialisation in Tracks 2 and 3. According to the terminology used in the existing studies, the ASEM process has

facilitated mutual understanding, norms and concepts exchanging among participants. Also, it rationalise international relations, especially beneficial for bilateral state-to-state relation management.

9.1.3. The actor-institution-function model Putting these special findings together generates the answer to a larger puzzle (Figure 9.1): how the institutional design of an inter-regional forum like ASEM and the actors involved mutually influence each other. This model illustrates how the institutional background set by the founders affects the engagement of actors, degree of inter-regionalism and functions of an inter-regional forum. The model suggests that inter-regionalism is both dependent and independent variables in contemporary international relations. Existing international actors affect the formation and development of inter-regional cooperative frameworks and vice-versa.

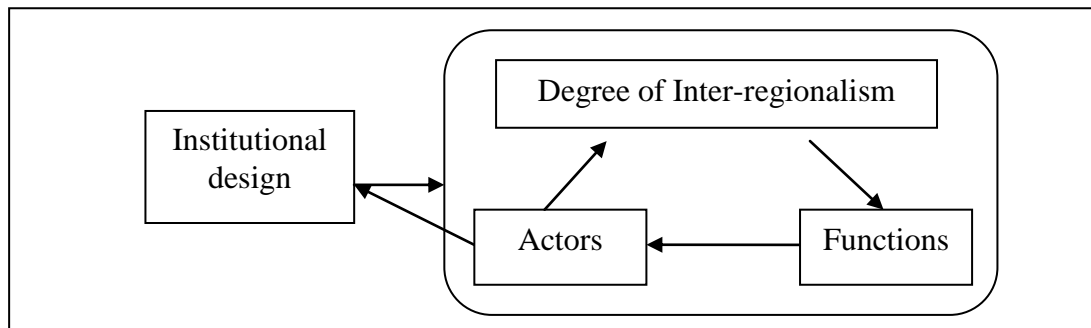


Figure 9.1: Independent and dependent variables in an inter-regional forum

Figure 9.2 illustrates how the above variables correlate to the case-study of this research: at the outset the founding members of ASEM designed the process as an informal and non-legally binding forum, they retained the power to control the types of actors included in the process and sustained state-centrism. The founding partners did not seem to be prepared to share their power with other actors; all major roles in the process were assigned to the governments. No supra-national body was created,

while ASEF, the only common institution established, is intergovernmental and given a limited mandate to manage only one of ASEM's three pillars. Neither is there any attempt to develop ASEM into an independent actor.

All ASEM initiatives have to be endorsed by consensus and contain no binding power. Even if certain ASEM partners are eager to cooperate beyond national and regional borders, no significant delivery can be generated under the ASEM framework. Furthermore, none of the ASEM partners possesses enough power to dictate the process; together with the principle of consensus, the working method reflects the lowest common denominator accepted by every partner.

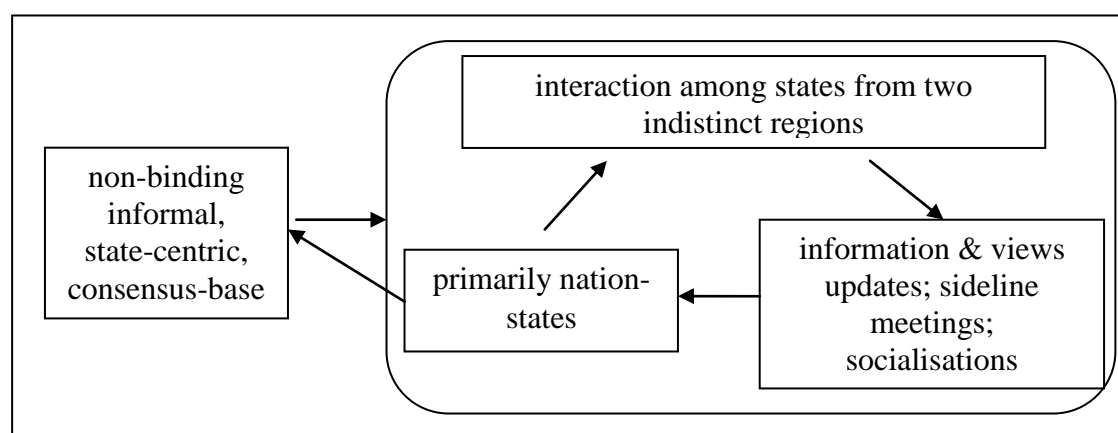


Figure 9.2: Correlation between actors, institutional development and functions of ASEM

Moreover, non-state actors' engagements remain passive and controlled. Which type of civil society actors to invite to an ASEM event, as well as when, and in what form are all decided by the partner governments. Meanwhile, ASEM partners have demonstrated a preference towards the business community. Attempts of the non-state actors to use ASEM as an additional channel to influence the government policies have had minimal effect thus far. An inter-regional inter-governmental forum like ASEM remains largely a domain of high politics, in which the civil society and

general public are largely peripheral. Although some elites from the civil society (namely business leaders, academics, university students and parliamentarians) are included in the ASEM's unofficial track, the number of individuals who have directly participated in the ASEM process remains low. From a more cynical perspective, the controlled inclusion of a limited number of non-state actors can be seen as a symbolic attempt of ASEM governments to avoid the critique of being undemocratic.

Arguably, the acceptance of two regional institutions (the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat) as full members in ASEM by nation-states can be attributed to the non-binding nature of the process. ASEM partners do not have to vote for obligatory actions as they do in institutions like the UN General Assembly or the WTO, so the 'double-representation' of the EU and ASEAN member states has not provoked any opposition.

Owing to its state-centrism and non-binding nature, ASEM now serves primarily as one of the tools for its partner governments in external affairs. Many existing studies have either assumed that regions as independent actors or that states from the same region share united objectives. As these pre-conditions were not met at present, it is unrealistic to expect ASEM to perform functions like power balancing or bandwagon between regions, or the formation of an inter-regional level for global governance. Moreover, the ASEM case has revealed a huge divergence in interests and engagement among individual ASEM partners. Partners from the same region do not necessarily act collectively, instead, the states speak from their national perspective. In the ideal-type of pure inter-regionalism, there would be no differences between Chinese, Japanese, Thai, India or Mongolian views in the Asian bloc; and no EU member state would have to send its national leader but would be represented by a

communal EU official. The present reality is that each ASEM partner uses ASEM to project its own national voice on the international stage.

Whilst ASEM is referred to as one of the most advanced models of inter-regionalism and involves the most advanced regional organisation in the world (the EU), the domination of state-centrism suggests that pure inter-regionalism is far from attainable at present. The EU's *actorness* was found to be marginal in ASEM, whereas the EU member states are all individual members in the process and act for themselves. They also actively engage in bilateral state-to-state diplomacy on the sidelines of ASEM meetings. Given that the most advanced regionalism model failed to act as a single united front, it is even more unrealistic to expect other regions to do so. The empirical evidence suggests that pure region-to-region interaction is an ideal case. In practice, inter-regionalism would be more likely to remain interaction among states from two more or less distinct regions. This form of inter-regional interaction is commonly found on the international stage, namely the EU-Mercosur relation and FEALCA.

This empirical analysis revealed that the present form of inter-regional fora do exert special added-value to international relations, albeit under various institutional constraints. They offer participants opportunities to exchange information and views, to share best experience and practices; for connection building, fostering mutual understanding, identifying potential partners for more concrete cooperation, as well as demonstrating good diplomatic gestures (as political symbolism). Each partner gains a platform to express their view on issues which concern them. This is especially important for smaller or weaker states, whose voices are easily overshadowed by the bigger counterparts. Furthermore, regular fora help narrowing the psychological distance between participants. In the long-run, this contributes to lessen

misunderstanding and misperception not only inter-regionally but also intra-regionally.

In terms of diplomacy, a multilateral forum which occurs with a fixed time interval provides partners with regularly platform to manage foreign affairs with each other. The additional opportunities created for partners to conduct sideline meetings are particularly helpful. Certainly, each partner has more than one such platform to meet each other, to name a few there are the UN, the WTO and a number of inter-regional as well as regional fora. Some states have even more meeting opportunities if they are members of special groupings such as G8, BRICS and ARF. Therefore, ASEM is not the only venue where its partners can gather, but it does offer one regular platform for a substantial mass of simultaneous bilateral meetings to take place on the sidelines.

In terms of qualitative contributions, the leaders can build up personal connections through meeting repeatedly. When accumulated, such inter-personal relations can turn into concrete diplomatic cooperation. The same applies to the non-state actors gathered in Track 2 and Track 3. Socialisation of individuals within the same group allows cross-cultural communications and may eventually facilitate norm diffusion. However, concepts such as norm diffusion and socialisation are very abstract to be gauged. Specific and carefully designed research will be needed for further study on such contribution of inter-regionalism.

Notably, the continuous enlargements have transformed ASEM further away from pure inter-regionalism. Empirically, no visible impacts on the functions by this evolution are found in this research. The list of core members remains the same as

most of the new members are not active. The expansions bring more partners in the information sharing sessions and more options for sideline meetings.

All things considered, with its low institutional cost, ASEM provides its partners with an additional channel for regular meetings in plenary sessions as well as ad-hoc meetings on the sidelines. The availability of such a cheap communication tool does no harm to the international relations. The puzzle behind new comers' accession to ASEM albeit its lack of concrete delivery is, hence, revealed – gaining an extra channel to exchange information and experience with a large group of other countries, acquiring an additional platform to handle bilateral diplomacy, and demonstrating close relation with the respective regional group, although only symbolically, all without investing high institutional or diplomatic costs.

The findings of this research support that of H änggi who argued that ‘the importance of ASEM is based more on political symbolism than substance.’⁵⁸⁸ On the other side of the coin, the political and diplomatic cost will be high to terminate the process. A halt would be read as an indication of a very bad relationship between the partners. At the moment, financial and human resources are reasonably low to sustain the process, yet, if more partners choose to send lower level officials to future summits and MMs, ASEM will gradually lose momentum, and then fade away. Nonetheless, a total abolition of the entire process would involve a high cost in terms of political symbolism. One possible outcome of the growing disappointment and a decrease in interest can be calling off the summit. In such a scenario, ASEM can still be sustained by the MMs, SOMs and ad-hoc initiatives, whose frequency and coverage may be reduced. Still, such a ‘downgrading’

⁵⁸⁸ Heiner H änggi, “Small State as a Third State: Switzerland and Asia-Europe Interregionalism,” in *Small States inside and outside the European Union: Interests and Policies*, Goetschel Laurent ed. (the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 88.

will inevitably be read as a stagnation in Asia-Europe relation, which the active ASEM partners would not like seeing.

Back to the examination on inter-regionalism, it should not be fixed on an ideal case scenario, which can only be achieved when two highly unified supranational regional organisations interact and are willing to commit to legally-binding actions (Figure 9.3). Otherwise, the true potential of actual inter-regionalism, which brings together nation-states from two regions, would be overlooked.

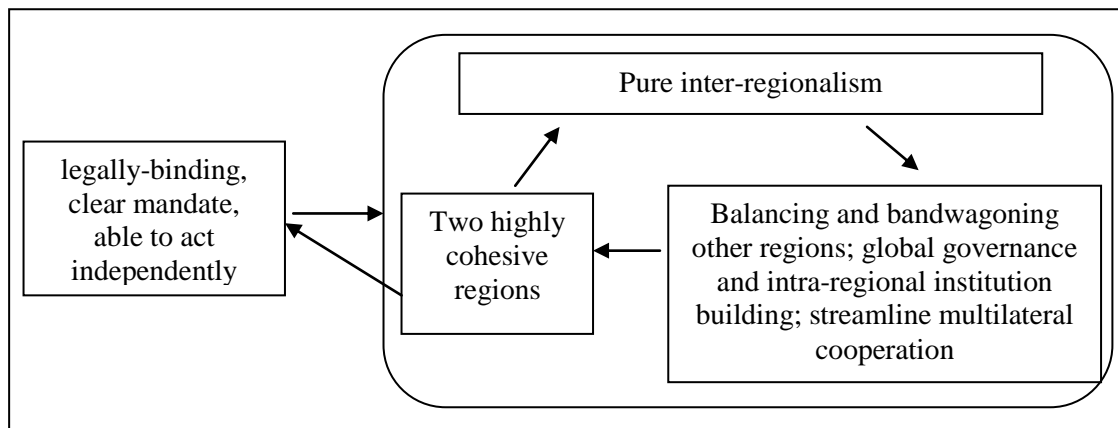


Figure 9.3: Correlation between actors, institutional development and functions in ideal pure inter-regionalism

9.2. The appropriate theoretical approach

In this research, a post-positivist perspective, which suggests that no single theory can provide the full story of the complex and ever-changing international relations, is adopted. The applicability of theories varies in different issue areas and different time. This research suggests that the three grand theories, each having different accents, can complement each other in explaining the complicated and ever-changing international interaction. Although realists and liberal institutionalists perceive international relations differently, this thesis argues that they form two extreme ends of a spectrum. They are not mutually exclusive but mutually transferable, with the aid of social

constructivism. At the realist end, nation-states lack trust on each other and focus on maximising their own power so as to survive. At the liberal end, nation-states co-exist with non-state actors (such as multilateral or regional institutions, multinational businesses and civil society organisations); the actors cooperate to solve common problems and seek mutual gains. The reality, which is not static, can be any point on the spectrum. When the identity and mutual recognition between actors change, international relations can shift from power-struggle (the realist end) to cooperative global governance (the liberal end).

In the case-study here, ASEM is interpreted as a pure inter-regional interaction by some existing studies. However, the national identity of the major actors was found consistently stronger than the regional one, retaining ASEM at the realist end of the spectrum. When setting the institutional design, ASEM founding partners preferred regulations which maintain state-centrism. During the actual interactions, constituent members of the EU as well as those of ASEAN mainly manage their external relations individually instead of as a united regional front. In contrast, when the regional identity increases and shared norms proliferate, regional organisations or regions will increase in *actorness*; subsequently, ASEM will move towards the ideal case of inter-regionalism at the liberal end.

In the analysis of a non-static process like ASEM, the three IR schools complement each other in explanatory power and can be combined to elucidate different moments of international relations. The actor-institution-function model above is a combination of the accents of the three grand theoretical schools: ideational forces of constructivism, institution of liberal institutionalism and power distribution of realism. At present, behaviours of the majority of ASEM partners in the process are found

closer to the realist paradigm. When mutual trust, interdependence and the sense of partnership increase, nation-states will become more willing to cooperate with each other and less sceptical of other types of actors in international relations. In other words, when mutual perception improves and collective identity strengthens, interactions between ASEM partners can move towards the liberal paradigm. Notably, the movement along this realist-liberal spectrum is likely to be back and forth. Whether, and if yes where, an equilibrium point exists is a question for future studies in inter-regionalism.

This theoretical conclusion is applicable to inter-regionalism as well as the wider international relations. For instance, in regionalism, when national identity and interest are on top of the regional ones, the cooperation remains intergovernmental. Cooperation only continues when the calculated gains satisfy the nation-states. On the contrary, when cohesiveness increases and the regional partners increasingly identify themselves as one, regionalism proceeds towards supranational. Taking the BRICS process as another example, since 2006 it has provided the BRIC(S) countries with a regular platform to communicate and cooperate. When more and more shared interests and norms are identified by the five emerging powers, the sense of collectiveness and interdependence ameliorate. The relation subsequently moves from the realist power fighting and balancing towards liberalist positive-sum cooperation. This combination model of realism, liberal institutionalism and social constructivism can also be utilised to explain war and peace, multilateral cooperation and international conflict management in international relations.

9.3. Taking the study of inter-regionalism further

This research underscores the urgent need to alter the research direction on inter-regionalism from focusing on what it *should* offer to what it *can* offer. By demonstrating the persistent state-centrism in inter-regionalism and illustrating the lack of *actorness* of regions and regional organisations as independent actors, this research indicates why most of the theoretically-deduced functions failed to capture the reality. By focusing back to the true potential of inter-regionalism, observers and participants of inter-regional fora can invest their time and energy more appropriately on understanding and utilising platforms like ASEM.

As mentioned in the foregoing discussion, future research on inter-regionalism can explore whether an equilibrium point exists between the realist and liberalist paradigms. Also, the significance of the various causal factors identified to determine different ASEM partners' commitment in the process is worth further examination. This thesis emphasises chiefly on the endogenous factors in inter-regionalism, namely the type of actors involved, their identity and the institutional design they set. Further research on inter-regionalism can determine the exogenous factor such as influences from third players or from other similar fora. In the ASEM case, how the US's 'returning to Asia-Pacific' policy since late 2011, political instability in the Arab Springs, the East Asia Summit and ARF affect ASEM constitute worthy further research topics.

Additionally, domestic factors can be explored in future research. In the ASEM case, the potential questions include: 'how would the current reforms taken by the Myanmar government impact on its participation in ASEM?'; 'how will other ASEM partners react to Myanmar's reform?'; and, 'how will the implementation of Lisbon

Treaty and the establishment of the European External Action Service influence ASEM?.

By focusing back to reality, instead of the normative case of inter-regionalism, the identity of the actors in international relations and hence how they can utilise those inter-regional fora can be better understand. Consequently, the potential added-value and subsidiarity of inter-regionalism can be maximised.

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Appendixes

I. Questionnaire prepared for the interviews with key informants

- 1) In what way your office is involved with the ASEM summits?
- 2) In your view, what is the biggest challenge does your country face when dealing with Asia/Europe? Does ASEM process help to overcome this challenge? If yes, in what way? If no, why?
- 3) Among the ASEM partners (both Asian and European), which one/ones are the most important to your state:
 - i. At present:
 - ii. In the future:
- 4) In ASEM6 and the Ministerial Meetings between ASEM6 and ASEM7, have your country/EC/ASEAN hold any bilateral meeting or talks with another ASEM member states? If yes, what were the main outcomes of those meetings?
- 5) In ASEM7 and Ministerial Meetings between ASEM7 and ASEM8, have your held any bilateral meeting or talks with another ASEM member states? If yes, what were the main outcomes of those meetings?
- 6) How would you describe the role of the European Commission in the ASEM process?
- 7) On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “very inert” and 5 means “very active”, how would you rate the involvement of the following actors with the ASEM process?
 - i. Your own country
 - ii. Any Asian ASEM countries you like to comment on
 - iii. the European Commission
 - iv. the EU rotating Presidency
 - v. Any EU countries you would like to comment on
 - vi. the ASEAN Secretariat
 - vii. NGOs in your country
 - viii. Business community in your country
 - ix. Trade unions in your country
- 8) On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “open only for government” and 5 means “totally open to the public”, how would you rate the openness of ASEM process?

II. Questionnaire prepared for the interview with informant from ASEF

- 1) Is there a proportion in the number of ‘new participants’ (who have never took part in any ASEF or ASEM activities before) versus ‘old participants’ (who have already took part in one or more ASEF/ASEM activities before) in each ASEF activity?
- 2) Do you have any figure on the number of each type of civil society actor (NGOs, academic, art performers, media, government officials and etc) involved in ASEF activities (or in the Connecting Civil Society conferences)?
- 3) At the moment, how many staffs are there at ASEF at present? How many ASEM countries they represent?
- 4) From your observation, which ASEM partner governments are active in supporting ASEF’s work?
- 5) Also which ASEM partner public are the most active in participating in ASEF activities?