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Vsebina/Contents

Image Content on Facebook as a Tool of Online Activism

Lyudmila Boykova[1]

Abstract

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has led to an important development in traditional forms of protest movements and the emerging of online activism as a specific form of activism with its own particularities. This paper considers the self-generated image content created by political groups on Facebook as a tool for engaging larger support for their cause. The main purpose of the research is to outline what type of image content stipulates larger support amongst the followers of a certain Facebook group. Six major types of image content were outlined through Web Content Analysis. The popularity of every group was measured by the number of Likes, Shares and Comments received

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for the period of 24 days. Those three variables are measured as these are the options that Facebook offers to show the online popularity of every post. The empirical findings showed that the individualized image content (personal and real life examples) reaches larger audience and acquires greater support for the cause than the more generalized content and slogans.

Keywords: Online activism, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Facebook

Introduction

Protests and social movements have shaken the political systems of Southeastern Europe in recent years. From Ljubljana to Istanbul the protest waves spread the will of citizens for social change. The protests focused on particular tangible issues like the corruption of politicians in Slovenia, prices of electricity in Bulgaria, ID number allocation for newborn babies in Bosnia Herzegovina or the future of Gezi Park in Istanbul. In many cases once the situation heats, it inflames in outrages in anti-parliament demonstrations that sometimes achieve their goals like the resignation of the governments in Slovenia and Bulgaria that came about under the pressure of the protests.

An interesting case is the second protest wave in Bulgaria which started only a couple of weeks after the new government was formed. In fact by the time the protest started the government didn't have the chance to make any significant decisions on the governance of the country. This new protests which started in May 2013 were provoked by controversial appointments made by the new government and the comportment of the representatives of the extreme right nationalist "Ataka" party. What is different about these protests in comparison to previous ones in Bulgaria is that they have continued for more than 80 days in a moderately peaceful manner in the spirit of the "Occupy movement". As described by Castells the "Occupy movement" "was born on the Internet, diffused by the Internet, and maintained its presence on the Internet" and its "material form of existence was the occupation of public space" (Castells 2012: 168). The protesters in Bulgaria "occupy" the space in front of the Parliament. The public display of their disappointment included drinking coffee in front of the Parliament, sending humoristic text messages to deputies, creating a school program for the members of Parliament, etc.

At the same time with several days delay a smaller contra-protest group was formed (in support of the PM Oresharski). It stated that

Bulgaria is a functioning democracy, and its newly elected government deserves a chance to try to stabilise the country. Therefore, it was too early for new elections. The supporters of the government claimed to be against the appointment of Deliyan Peevsky for Chief of the National Security Agency. His nomination unleashed the public dissatisfaction as he is considered to be a part of oligarchic structures. The counter-protesters argued for a longer period of time in which the new government could show its competence.

In the turbulent times of protests, counter-protests and massive media coverage of the situation in Bulgaria this paper focuses on the way individuals connect and communicate with each other referring to the protests in the online environment. The present paper examines the online participation of people in political groups on Facebook as a form of online activism. As social media allows “committed groups to play by new rules” (Gladwell and Shirky 2011: 154) the tools for engaging support through social media have their own particularities. Social networks allow the users to “create their own content, distribute it online, and comment” (Hanson et al. 2011: 32). We consider that the creation and reaction to self-generated image contents is a way to express civil engagement and commitment to important political messages. “What makes social media useful for digital activism may not be its interactivity but rather the fact that these technologies collapse the barrier to broadcast.”(Brodock 2009) As protesters want to gain larger support for their cause and initiate a greater real-life participation in the protest movement the paper is going to explore the dynamics of competing ideas and slogans in the online environment. The popularity of every post on Facebook and the daily creation of self-generated content is important as the network algorithm prioritizes newer items on each individual's “news feed” in order to show up-to-date content (Manjoo 2011). Furthermore when one item is “shared” and “liked” by many people it becomes more noticeable and diffuses on a larger scale.

Numerous Facebook groups have been formed in relation to the protest movement (e.g. “Occupy Bulgaria”, “We protest”, “The Idiots of Bulgaria”, “National protest against the outrages in Bulgaria”). These groups create every day posts on Facebook with mainly image content and slogans in order to popularize their cause and to foster people to go on the street. Protesters stressed in many different ways they were well educated and civilized people who go on protest with their children and in full consciousness. This point had to be underlined in response to the accusations of politicians from the governing parties that they were a drunken crowd terrorizing the city. Protesters call not only for fresh elections in the country but also for an overall change of the political system - maybe to a majoritarian parliament or a presidential republic. As in other protests the participants don't have a clear vision how to change the existing situation (Egmond 2013).

The particularities of online activism have drawn the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines. The conservative blogger Andrew Sullivan claimed that the "revolution will be twittered" in the context of the 2009 Iran protests. That statement is related to the growing importance of all kinds of social networks in the formation of activist movements. The application of ICT to social movement activities has contributed to the shift of balance of power amongst traditional actors (Castells 2007, 2009). ICT could represent an important alternative medium for progressive social movements, as shown by Indymedia (Fuchs 2010). Social media could be regarded as "long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere" (Shirky 2011: 32). The ICT also allow forms of activism possible only in the cyberspace like hacktivism- group of hackers attack and deface selected Web pages, create spoof sites and rerouting web traffic (Michael D., Mccaughey, M, 2003).

Research question: *What type of image content provokes larger online support for a particular political cause?*

The analysis explores the use of patriotic images, humorous pictures, caricatures, photos from the protests, the combination of image content with slogans or other textual messages in online protest groups on Facebook and furthermore - the popularity of different types of image content. The popularity is measured by the number of likes, shares and comments that every post containing image content acquires as these three options increase the online popularity of the posts. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial in a broader sense as it is related to the development of online political participation, online social movements and viral marketing in the aspect when they enter in competition for provoking online and real life activity.

Conceptual Framework

The paper considers the online participation of people in political groups on Facebook as a form of online activism that plays an important part in the strategy of online activist groups. As Castells conceptualizes "the more the movement is able to convey its message over the communication networks, the more citizen consciousness rises, and the more the public sphere of communication becomes a contested terrain” (Castells 2012: 237). The overall online activities of the Facebook political groups have an important role in the creation, communication and participation in real life protests of the type of the “Occupy movement”. “[I]t is through these digital communication networks that the movements live and act, certainly in interaction with face-to-face communication and with the occupation of urban space“ (Castells 2012: 229).

As movements born from social network activities are considered leaderless (Castells 2012: 224) the responsibility for the content creation and the distribution of the information online is shared between the members of the online group. Everyone can start or contribute to an existing online group but the important question is how to persuade people to support and promote a particular cause. In order to achieve real life participation it is important to engage people in the online activities on a dailybasis which is enabled by the nature of social networks themselves as the process of networking keeps the energy flowing (Castells 2012: 144) and could successfully provoke real life participation.

Methodology

The source of primary data is the Facebook group "National protest against the outrages in Bulgaria". This particular group was chosen for the analysis as it expresses critiques towards all political parties. It was formed before the protests in February and is a group with stable followers. At the time of the analysis it has 88 753 likes which is much above the average for protest groups on Facebook in Bulgaria ("We protest"- 1405 likes, "Save Bulgaria, don't vote for GERB"- 4 922, "The Idiots of Bulgaria"- 49 588, etc.). As we like to compare the response to the impersonal and more general image content and slogans to the more personal and real life examples, six major types of image content on the Facebook page were differentiated through Web Content Analysis in the time span of 24 days.

- Group A - consists of a list with mobile Numbers - claimed to be the numbers of politicians and slogans to call these politicians and tell them your opinion on their work.
- Group B – consists of a photo, collage or a caricature of political figures plus text.
- Group C – consists of a photo from the protest plus slogan added by the one uploading the photo.

- Group D – consists of a photo of the slogans from the real life protests.
- Group E – consists of images and slogans of respected Bulgarians - ordinary people publicly known for their noble acts like risking their own lives for saving others, etc.
- Group F – consists of images and slogans of patriots from the nineteenth century (e.g. Levski, Botev etc).

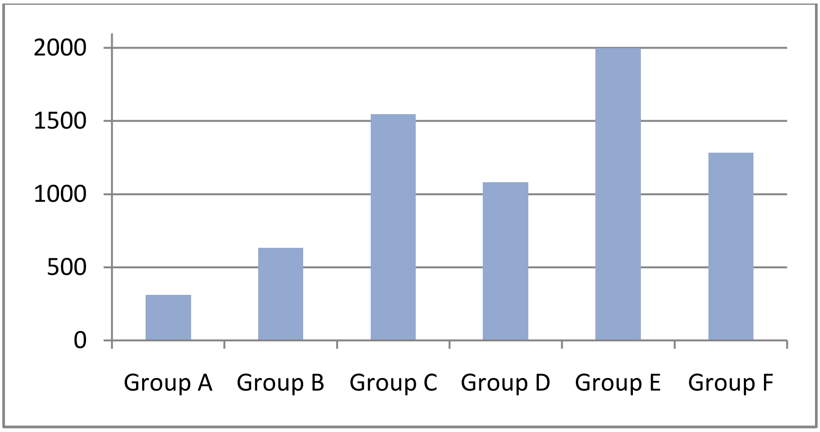
The impersonal and more general image content and slogans are the List of mobile numbers, General political images and Images of Patriots. The more personal and real life examples are the Photos from the protests and Images of respected Bulgarians. The analysis will be led ceteris paribus. It will not take into account the quality of the images, the different content of every image in every group, the time correlation between a political act or speech and the release of the image, the originality of the image or text content.

The online support for every type of self-generated image content is analyzed through descriptive statistics by measuring three important variables: the number of Likes, the number of Shares and the number of Comments every image acquires. We measure those three variables as they help a post to become noticeable and diffused on a larger scale. Furthermore the number of likes every post gathers indicates the support of the audience towards its content, the number of shares shows how this post is spreading in the social network and the number of comments indicates the debate that it initiates. Each one of these three indicators is measured and analyzed separately as they measure different aspects of the online popularity of a post.

Empirical findings

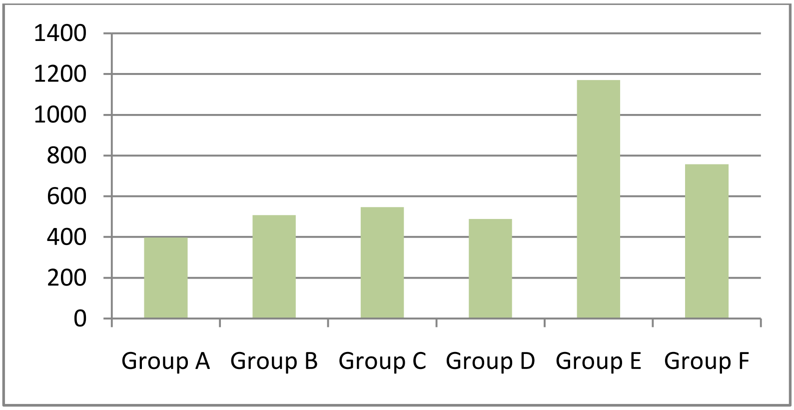
Number of likes - the data is very clear - the more personal content (Groups C,D,E) generates much more likes than a more general one (Groups A, B, F). This first variable suggests that the individualized image content generatesstrongersupport towards the common cause. Within the groups with more general content only the Group F generates higher response from the audience.

Average number of Likes



Analyzing the number of shares for each group the data again indicate that the more personal content (Groups C, D,F) generates a larger number of shares than the more general content (Groups A, B, F). Once again only Group F has higher number of shares. This second variable shows whether the post will spread on other Facebook pages and represents an important variable when analyzing viral content. The results support the hypothesis that individualized image content tends to be shared more often then the more general content.

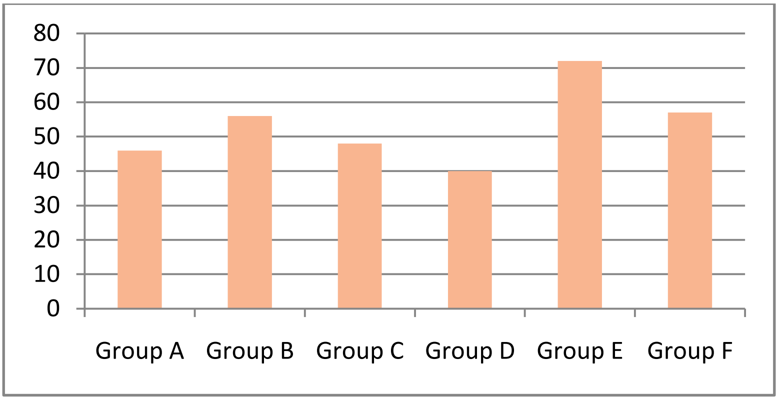
Average number of Shares



Regarding the number of comments there aren't so important differences between the more personal and the more general content. Most of the comments are generated by Groups B, E, F.

The third variable shows the intensity of the debate between Facebook members initiated by the posting of every image. Here the most important finding is that the groups of images of respected Bulgarians and Patriots generate most of the responses and those comments have mainly positive connotation.

Average number of Comments



Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the popularity of different types of image content used by online protest groups on Facebook. The empirical findings suggest that the individualized content stimulates a broader response from the audience. In order to analyze the importance of the time lapse between the publication of the image and the reading of its popularity we conducted an experiment where a test group of 12 images (from all the 6 groups) were selected and we measured the changes in responses for 5 consecutive days. The results showed a moderate augmentation of the responses that didn't considerably change the primary gap between the groups.

As the comparison of the originality of the image content within a group and between groups was not the main purpose of the research we noted only the major particularities:

- The group of list with mobile Numbers – the first post gained the higher response and the next posts were with considerably lower response.
- The group with a photo, collage or a caricature of political figures plus text – there was a higher response to posts containing images of politicians whose behavior was considered being the initial cause for the protest (e.g. Delyan Peevsky and Volen Siderov).
- A photo from the protest plus slogan added by the person uploading the photo – a stable number of responses for all the posts.
- A photo of the slogans from the protesters - the higher number of responses was for images of children on the protests. The photos from supporting protests in foreign countries (UK,

Austria, Canada etc.) gained responses around the average rate.

- Images of respected Bulgarians - ordinary people publicly known for their noble acts like risking their own lives for saving others, etc. - all had very high number of responses.
- Images and slogans of the Patriots from the nineteenth century (like Levski, Botev, etc.) - all had a stable number of responses without considerable variation depending on the personality of the patriot.

Conclusion

The current paper gives a glimpse of the process how different Facebook posts gain online popularity. Further investigation of the way self-generated online content acquires popularity and initiates real-life participation is needed in order to understand more thoroughly the power of this new type of communication and its various implications in both online and offline activism. The results could be useful for the development of online activism tactics and campaigns. The survey of the phenomena of response to different types of self-generated online image content is needed for both better understanding of political online activism and overall understanding of viral image sharing. The opportunity given by social media to easily create online content and distribute information on an international scale could lead to increased empowerment of ordinary people as they have the opportunity to promote their thoughts and believes. At the same time online activism also challenges the moral values of the creators as to which cause to promote and how to create a working online strategy that leads to real life results. This issue is particularly important as the "life" of a Facebook group is strongly related to the creation and innovation of its content. As a result from the fast development of online activism emerge new forms of collective solidarity mediated by ICT that also need further detailed investigation as they are related to successful fostering of real life activities.

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ASEM: Interregionalism in the Search for the End of the Crisis

Vladimír Beroun[2]

Abstract

By surveying and evaluating recent trends in the relations between Europe and Asia during the main crisis period (2010 – 2012), the paper strives to perform a conceptual and empirical analysis of a multi-level and global governance in the context of interregional cooperation with a particular focus on the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). In order to tease out its characterizing traits and allow for its utilization in the debated context, the article intends to further develop the theoretical conceptualisation of interregionalism and to revive the stagnating debate over this concept with regard to

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the current financial and economic crisis. The article draws five main conclusions: (1) ASEM as an interregional framework is too flexible (in terms of agenda-setting) and too inclusive (in terms of enlargement). (2) Given the incapability of ASEM to react proactively to various challenges influencing its Member States, interregionalism cannot be considered as a fully-fledged contribution to multi-level or global governance. (3) Additionally, interregionalism in the context of the Asia-Europe Meeting will not result in the establishment of the “Eurasian Century” of leadership, despite the unquestionable need for more result-oriented policy frameworks stemming from the crisis period. (4) Interregionalism as a policy approach thus cannot be reduced to a loose interaction of nation states or regions because it will require a properly organized cooperation framework. (5) Finally, the bilateral framework of cooperation between individual Asian and European states is much more efficient at this moment.

Key words: ASEM, APEC, crisis, interregionalism

Introduction

> *"Post-global financial crisis world will be increasingly dominated by China and the United States."*(Global Policy, 2012)

Even though the economic interdependence between Europe and Asia is growing, their formalized interregional cooperation on a global field is rather questioned or even completely ignored by contemporary international relations practitioners and academicians. Even worse, some scholars articulate a vision of a world predominantly based on the cooperation of the Group of Two (G-2) leading to a clear marginalisation of Europe (Foreign Policy, 2008). Therefore, in order to handle the challenges stemming from globalization, individual states, regions, international organisations, NGOs or other actors in the international arena have to develop new types of governance.

The former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated in her "America's Pacific Century" discourse that "the future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the centre of the action" (Foreign Policy, 2011). She concludes that the Asia-Pacific might become a key drivingforceof global politics very soon. “Stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, the region spans two oceans – the Pacific and the Indian – that are increasingly linked by shipping and strategy.” (Foreign Policy, 2011)

But what about Europe, which is geographically and historically situated even closer to Asia than the United States? Is there a specific policy approach that would help place Europe right at the centre of future political actions that could be decided in Asia? In the 1990s, the European Union explicitly declared its interest in closer ties with Asia under the framework of interregional cooperation, which later resulted in establishment of the so-called Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

This leads us to a question about which policy approach will prove to be sustainable, efficient and operational enough to face and mitigate various dilemmas such as the economic and financial crisis or economic and political misbalances stemming from globalization. For almost two decades, Europe and Asia have been searching for such a framework. Through existing bilateral relations and multilateralfora and organisations, both Europe and East Asia already endeavour to influence other countries, regions and the global community. Nevertheless, the current theoretical and empirical debate over different types of governance lacks certain research on how both Europe and Asia could exercise influence over the world – facing crisis – through advancing theiremerging interregional relationship.

Interregionalism is generally considered as a sub-theory that that is based upon, or largely contained within, anothergrand theory. Needless to say, no other sub-theory of international relations has been as pilloried, misunderstood or caricatured as often as interregionalism. Notwithstanding the fact that current scholars do not share aclearly united theoretical conceptualisation of interregionalism, most scholarsuniformly study interregionalism as a geographical process that is based on common sense of a regional identity aimed at striking a balance with other regions.However, this geopolitical and rather neorealist interpretation of interregionalism fails to examine the process from the policy (governance) point of view.

Furthermore, relevant research on interregionalism as an organizing principle of the Asia-Europe Meeting has recently been stagnating. The last works devoted to the conceptual debate over interregionalism in the context of ASEM date between 2002 and

2008 only. However, a majority of contemporary scholars3discussing international regionalism and regionalisation have turned their attention to an alternative interregional framework driven by the Asia-Pacific community – the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the related Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Recognizing the considerable disinterest of scholars and the general public in ASEM, following up the rather incomplete and one-sided research on interregionalism and applying the indicators ofglobal governance defined by HolgerMürle, thepaperattempts to evaluate interregionalism as a policy approachat the level of global (multi-level) governance with a particular focus on the Asia-Europe Meeting in the crisis period 2010-2012.

Intending to advance the current debate over interregionalism, we will put considerable emphasis on the theoretical underpinnings and debates on interregionalism in the context of globalization, regionalisation and related governance. In addition, we will examine whether the ongoing economic and financial crisis had any impact on the interregional process. To sum up, the paper seeks to contribute to the theoretical and empirical evidence

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regarding whether interregionalism can lead to an effective global (multi-level) governance with the establishment of the “Eurasian Century” of leadership.It will be assumed that the difficulties in contemporary global governance and related disinterest in institutional narrative in international affairs, as an interregional process, the Asia-Europe Meeting has a rather a limited impact on further deepening relations between Europe and Asia. Therefore, in order to be able to lay the foundation for a new Eurasian leadership, the Asia-Europe Meeting must undergo dramatic changes.

The first part of the paperoutlines basic theoretical concepts and terminology linked to interregionalism. The chapter will guide us to comprehend the place of interregionalism in the new level of governance, its perspectives and potential for use in a particular case of Eurasian cooperation.The second chapter of the paper will look more closely at the specific case of interregional cooperation between Europe and Asia – the Asia-Europe Meeting. The third chapter of the paper will focus on the final reflection of the ASEM interregional process. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part draws final conclusions from the qualitative analysis of the ASEM Chair’s Statements in light of the initial ambitious plans and strategies. The second part contributes to the debate over potential development and the direction of interregionalism. In this regard, we will also demonstrate how an alternative example of interregional cooperation fits into the debate over changing the concept of interregionalism.

Theoretical Implications: Interregionalism in the ASEM Context

First, we will look more closely at the specific case of interregional cooperation between Europe and Asia – the Asia-Europe Meeting. In order to evaluate what has been achieved and what impact the interregional narrative has on the mutual Eurasian relations, we will first outline the basic theoretical contours of the cooperation. Afterwards, we will confront these theoretical implications with empirical evidence.

We have segmented the following chapter into three parts, each of which presents the Asia-Europe Meeting from a different perspective. The first part analyses the fundamental reasoning behind the establishment of ASEM. The second part looks at the key characteristics of the ASEM as a process while the third evaluates ASEM in the context of international relations.

Starting Points and Reasoning of the ASEM Process

Reflecting the new global post-Cold War context and the global perspectives of the 21st century, the summitry origins of the Asia-Europe Meeting process were based on a common vision to cooperate closer between Europe and Asia and on a shared recognition that the mutual relations between the two regions had to be reinforced and strengthened (European Commission, 2012).

In this spirit, the European Commission published a Communication to the Council called “Towards a New Strategy for Asia” in July 1994, underlining the political, economic and cultural significance of Asia and initiating the modernisation of the relationship with Asia. It is thus necessary to bear in mind that ASEM does not feature a traditional treaty establishing the process (European Commission, 1994).

The overall objectives of this European “rediscovery” of Asian region were to strengthen the Union’s economic presence in Asia, to contribute to stability in Asia by promoting international co-operation and understanding, to promote the economic development of the less prosperous countries and regions in Asia, to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Asia.

Furthermore, the European Union called for a "set of clear policy priorities across Asia" (European Commission, 1994, p. 4), which proves the existence of a common strategy of one region towards another region. The EU basically strived for strengthening its bilateral relations not only with individual countries, but also with the region(s) in Asia. The Communication also mentioned explicitly:

> *"the support for effort by Asian countries to cooperate at the regional and subregional level such as the ASEAN Regional Forum with a view to enhancing peace and security in the region and generally to strengthen the Union's relations with regional groups such as ASEAN or SAARC".*(European Commission, 1994, p. 4)

Another EU priority was:

> *"to associate Asian countries in the management of international affairs and in particular to encourage them to play a more active role in multilateral actions with a view to*

maintaining international peace and security". (European Commission, 1994, p. 4-7)

Among other priorities and policies, the EU Communication also emphasized the necessity to expand Euro-Asian trade and investments, to promote market-oriented economies and sustainable development, and to alleviate poverty in Asia's least prosperous countries.

Most importantly, in order to meet these ambitious goals, the EU sets out various Asia-related policies. For instance, the Communication mentions bilateral relations (i.e. dialogue with individual countries and regions in Asia), multilateral co-operation (i.e. wide-ranging dialogue with Asia within the UN system), commercial policy (i.e. mainly the liberalisation rounds with the GATT/WTO system), development and humanitarian aid (i.e. the EU being the second largest donor to Asia after Japan), and finally various investment and financial facilities (i.e. European Investment Bank as well as the European Community Investment Partners promoting new investments opportunities). By admitting that "the Union will not be able to take for granted automatic acceptance of European values and ways of doing things" (European Commission, 1994, p. 18) as before, the

Communication implicitly demonstrates that such a pattern of relations has to be reinforced and upgraded.

For that reason, in the wake of new global post-Cold War security and economic challenges and of Asia's search of a more prominent role on the world stage, the EU envisages a “new political approach towards Asia” (European Commission, 1994, pp. 7-13). Above all, this approach should be based on strengthening the political and security dialogue with Asia, including arms control and non-proliferation, human rights promotion, and immediate drug trafficking elimination. In addition, the EU intends to launch a new trade and co-operation strategy towards Asia as far as economic issues are concerned.

Given the (1) rapid economic growth in Asia and related opportunities and challenges, (2) variations in growth and emerging imbalances of the Triad (i.e. EU, North America, East Asia-) as well as (3) the structure of foreign direct investment, (4) sustainability of growth in developing Asia, (5) market transition and (6) finally state of poverty, the EU wants to transform its current economic relations with Asia and develop new pro-active strategies towards Asia based on covering:

> *"relations with regional groupings in Asia such as the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations); SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation); sub-regional arrangements such as the numerous cross-border 'growth triangles' now emerging; and supra regional groups such as APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation), which link East Asia across the Pacific to the Americas and Australasia."* (European Commission, 1994, p. 18)

Furthermore, the EU intends:

> *"to reinforce, or where it does not yet exist, establish a non-confrontational dialogue of equals, to address questions of bilateral concern and also to consider jointly the growing number of global concerns: most notably the maintenance of an open rule-based world trade system (…)".*(European Commission, 1994, p. 18)

The assessment of the term "rules-based"is crucial in the forthcomingreflection of interregionalism.Correspondingly, the Communication stresses that such dialogue ought to go beyond purely bilateral structures and explicitly expresses support for regionalism and multilateralism:

> *"If the Union can assist in the development of a consensus approach, this will feed into inter-regional initiatives (e.g. APEC) and smooth the path for work undertaken at the multilateral level, for example concerning the post Uruguay Round agenda."* (European Commission, 1994, p. 19)

Last but not least, the Communication highlights selected benefits from the reinforcement of the European economic presence in Asia and other initiatives related to business, investments, trade, agriculture, environment, and research cooperation. In conclusion, the European Commission was seeking to establish an ambitious cooperation platform that would not only pursue its interests in a traditional bilateral way, but also in the framework of multilateral organisations. Hence, the Union was ready to strengthen its relationship with regional and subregional economic and political fora so as to promote pro-actively a wide-ranging cooperation. The 1994 Communication thus became an ideological cornerstone of the ASEM process that started in 1996. In this spirit, the Asian side accepted the basic principles without issuing their own separate Communication.

To complete the whole picture about the starting points of the ASEM, it is interesting to note that in September 2001 (five years after the first ASEM summit took place in Bangkok), the European Commission revised and reaffirmed its objectives in another Communication to the Council called "Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships" (European Commission, 2001). In this Communication, the European Commission mainly focused on specification and reformulation of the previously proposed goals and objectives of its policies towards Asia, taking into account recent key economic and political developments.

Again, the Commission intended to establish a "comprehensive strategic framework for our relations with Asia and its subregions in the coming decade". In addition, the Communication proposed:

> *"an overall strategic framework for our [EU's] relations with Asia in the coming decade based on the core objective of strengthening the EU's political and economic presence across the region, and raising this to a level commensurate with the growing global weight of an enlarged EU".*(European Commission, 2001, p. 3)

Most importantly, the EU envisages to build "global partnerships and alliances with Asian countries, in appropriate international fora, to help address both the challenges and the opportunities offered by globalisation and to strengthen our joint efforts on global environmental and security issues" (European Commission, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, the updated Communication basically seeks to:

> *"review and update our [UE's] approach to Asia, to provide a new strategic framework which will address the changes since 1994, and to establish a coherent, comprehensive and balanced strategic approach for our relations with Asia in the coming decade".*(European Commission, 2001, p. 5)

Even though the language is similarly ambiguous and shallow, understanding of the second Communication in the context of five years of ASEM's existence is harder.With regard to the first Communication, one might have expected that the Eurasian interregional relations would have been institutionalized at some point. Nevertheless, the Communication only mentions that the EU and its Asian partners should "work together to strengthen global efforts in relation [to inter-regional as well as global issues]" (European Commission, 2001, p. 11), i.e. contributing to peace and security, mutual trade and investment flows, development of the less prosperous countries, spreading of democracy, good governance and the rule of law etc.. Nonetheless, the European Commission at least admits that:

> *"upgrading the institutional basis for our [EU's] relations with key partners in Asia would allow for a more coherent approach to all relevant issues (in the political and security fields as well as on economic and development issues), would create a powerful stimulus for the intensification of our [EU's] dialogue and cooperation in all areas, and would give a clear public signal of the commitment of both parties to raise our relationship to a new level".* (European Commission, 2001, p. 12)

Another ambitious part underscores the interest in building "global partnerships and alliances with Asian countries", such as international foraaddressing both the challenges and the opportunities of globalisation (mainly global environmental and security issues). In this regard, the EU is committed to "provid[ing] active support for reinforced regional integration, on the basis of mutual solidarity within ASEAN" (European Commission, 2001, p. 22).Finally, concerning the implementation and resources, the European Commission underlined that:

"in order for this Strategic Framework to be fully effective, it is essential that there is a proper consistency between the objectives being set, and the resources available to meet them (both in terms of staff and operational resources in headquarters and in the field, and in terms of the budgetary resources available for our cooperation programmes)."(European Commission, 2001, p. 26)

In further evaluation of real ASEM's statements and declarations, it will be interesting to assess what has really been achieved, mainly with regard to the issue of headquarters and further institutionalisation of the ASEM process.

Key Characteristics of the Asia-Europe Meeting[4]

Only two months after the first European Commission's Communication had been released, Singapore and France proposed to organize an EU-Asia summit in November 1994 in order to bring to life the ambitious words about building a new strategic partnership between the two regions. Following

[4] This chapter quotes substantial parts of the official website of the Asia-Europe Meeting and summarizes common knowledge about this inter-regional process. It is relevant for understanding and evaluating the inter-regional process.

Singapore's proposal, the first summit, called Asia-Europe Meeting, was held in Bangkok in March 1996, which marks the official commencement of the ASEM process (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013).

The Asia-Europe Meeting is an informal process of explicitly interregional dialogue between Europe and Asia which is based on a structure of three pillars that – as mentioned in the previous Communications – address various political, economic and cultural issues with the objective of deepening and strengthening the relationship between the two regions. Corresponding dialogues are coordinated by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their Senior Officials (SOM) with the assistance of a group of Coordinators. Also, they co-organize high-level summits that are held every two years either in Europe or in Asia, in accordance which the country that holds the rotating presidency of the Asia-Europe Meeting. So far altogether nine summits have taken place (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013).

After the Asian presidency held by Laos (Vientiane) in November 2012, Europe now holds the presidency holder and will organize the following summit in Brussels in 2014 (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013). The summits represent a quasi-doctrinal and most significant foundation of the entire ASEM "summitry" process. They are attended by the heads of states, relevant ministers, the President of the European Commission, and other representatives depending on the current agenda. In addition to the highest summit format, over 50 regular officials'[5] and ministerial[6] meetings at governmental level take place. Furthermore, ASEM initiates numerous workshops outside the government level by bringing together individual fora[7], lawmakers, businesses and civil society groups (EEAS, 2013). Last but not least, various ad-hoc cooperation initiatives have been put in place so far. For example, the so called ASEM Trust Fund was set up as a reaction to the Asian Financial crisis so as to deliver technical support and advice on various reforms of the Asian financial sector and social policies (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013).

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[5] These include for instance the Customs Working Group, Finance Deputies Meeting, Meeting of Directors General of Immigration, Meetings of Directors-General of Customs, Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM), and Senior Officials' Meetings on Trade and Investment (SOMTI)

[6] These include for instance the Economic Ministers Meetings, Finance Ministers Meetings, Environment Ministers Meetings, Foreign Ministers Meetings, Ministers of Education Meetings, Culture Ministers Meetings, and other Ministerial Meetings.

[7] These include for instance the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF), Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP), Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF), and ASEM Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC).

To sum up, the Asia-Europe Meeting has no Secretariat and follows the line of purely intergovernmental cooperation. The only official existing permanent ASEM institution is the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), which is described as "a not-for-profit foundation charged with promoting cultural, intellectual and people-to-people contacts between the two regions" (European Commission, 2010). Participating ASEM governments established the ASEF in February 1997. It is based in Singapore and funded by voluntary contributions coming from the governments with the purpose to finance projects related to civil society across Asia and Europe. ASEF has so far implemented approximately 600 projects, bringing together more than 17,000 direct participants and reaching out to an even wider audience in Asia and Europe (ASEF, 2013). These projects basically strive to promote "mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges" (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013).

Generally speaking, ASEM attempts to facilitate and stimulate progress in other fora, while it officially tries not to duplicate other bilateral or multilateralactions.The key features of the ASEM process include informality (i.e. non-binding character), multidimensionality, and emphasis on equal partnership, dual focus on high-level and people-to-people level (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013). Therefore, given the informality of the ASEM process, specific co-operation initiatives outlined by the Coordinators and Heads of Governments are rather complementary in relation to their respective bilateral relations. This format of a multilateral diplomacy complies with Volker Rittberger's explanation of the process as a "conference diplomacy" (Rittberger, 1997).

As far as the official agenda is concerned, the Asia-Europe Meeting is supposed to provide a platform for addressing international matters such as the reorganization of the world financial system, trade and investment liberalization within the WTO rounds, as well as United Nations reforms, weapons of mass destruction issues, terrorism, or migration flows. During the third ASEM summit that was held in Seoul in the Republic of Korea in October 2000 (ASEM InfoBoard, 2013), the ASEM process was significantly formalized by systematically dividing its activities into three basic pillars, similar to the basket structure of the Conference on

Security and Cooperation in Europe: (1) political pillar[8], (2) economic pillar,[9] and (3) social, cultural and education pillar[10].

As already mentioned above, the ASEM process emphasised on an "equal partnership, favouring general process of dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual benefit" for the actors involved(ASEM InfoBoard, 2013). It brings together 27 European Union Member States, 2 countries of the so called European Free Trade Association[11] and the European Commission with 20 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. In total, 51 partners are involved in the ASEM process (49 countries and 2

[8] The main fields of cooperation in this pillar include following chapters: addressing international and regional developments, reinforcing the multilateral system through effective multilateralism, security and anti-terrorism cooperation, dialogue on human rights and the rule of law, environmental dialogue and dialogue on migration.

[9] The main fields of cooperation in this pillar include following chapters: promoting economic multilateralism, enhancing trade and investment frameworks, fostering dialogue on financial issues, managing crisis, promoting dialogue with the private sector, and the ASEM Task Force for Closer Economic Partnership.

[10] The main fields of cooperation in this pillar include following chapters: promoting a dialogue on cultures and civilisations, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), developing Europe-Asia Education Co-operation, the ASEM Education Process, developing cooperation on Information Technology (IT): Trans-Eurasian Information Network (TEIN), and reaching out to civil society and the wider public.

[11] Norway and Switzerland

international organizations). Interestingly enough, the value of the ASEM process was further enhanced through a broader participation, and therefore, the Asia-Europe Meeting has been enlarged in four phases in total and the number of partners has been basically doubled since the first summit took place, which undoubtedly illustrates a particular attractiveness of the Eurasian interregional process.

The initial ASEM partnership that was launched in Bangkok in 1996 consisted of 15 EU Member States,[12] 10 Member States of the so-called Association of South East Asian Nations[13]and three other East Asia nations.[14] The Asia-Europe Meeting saw its first enlargement at the 5th ASEM Summit that was organized in Hanoi in 2004, where the 10 new EU Member States[15] and three new ASEAN countries[16]officially became part of the ASEM process, increasing the total membership of ASEM to 39 partners. In 2007,

[12] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

[13] Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

[14] China, Japan, and South Korea

[15] Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

[16] Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

the second round of enlargement brought in Bulgaria, Romania, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, and the ASEAN Secretariat. In October 2010 in Brussels, the third enlargement was probably the most exceptional one because Australia, New Zealand and Russia were invited to the process. Finally, at the recent 9th Vientiane (Laos) ASEM Summit of Heads of Government and State, three new member states joined the ASEM process: Norway, Switzerland and Bangladesh. Together the ASEM partners represent around half of global GDP, approximately 58% of the world's total population, and more than 60% of international commerce (EEAS, 2013).

International Relations Narrative in the ASEM Process

It is evident that neither states nor regions can compete alone any longer, which is a crucial condition for the existence of the ASEM process. As previously mentioned, the Asia-Europe Meeting serves as an example of an interregional cooperation. Interregionalism as a system of relations within overlapping regional arrangement is frequently used also as a term in international relations theories. Nevertheless, it is still not regarded as a standard and autonomous international relations theory due to its crossover and multidimensional nature (Beroun, 2013). Furthermore, it does not attempt to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for a peace system upon which international relations are usually analysed after World War II.

Interregionalism is thus becoming rather an approach that is applied transitionally across the three standard and generally accepted theories of international relations which are (neo)realism (i.e. soft balancing in the sense of power and institutions stemming from an interlinked security and economic environment and declining effectiveness of hard military power) (Buzan, 1998), (neo)liberalism (i.e. economic globalization leading to prospective institutionalism) and constructivism (i.e. creationof mutual Eurasian identity, values, norms of behaviour, social interaction). (Beroun, 2011, pp. 365-389)

Owing to the fact that such a theoretical weakness of interregionalism has repeatedly raised doubts about this transitional conceptualisation, specific research on interregional relations is quite questionable due to difficulties in defining common conceptual basis among scholars.In order to cope with such a challenging theoretical impasse, regionalists argue that it is fundamentally vital to focus on the initial empirical roots and triadic perspective of the ASEM process (Hänggi, 1999, pp. 56-80). For instance, as Julie Gilson claims, "regional coalitions are formed in order to redress or redefine power structures and counterbalance other equivalent regionalising forces." (Gilson, 2002, p. 9) This perspective – implying the trilateral relationship between three capitalist world powers,[17] i.e. the United States of America, the European Union and finally Japan (Mosl, 1990, pp. 66-83) – is also further developed in ourearlier works (Beroun, 2011, pp. 365-389). In principal, given the tight interdependence of the Triad and its natural balancing tendency and bearing in mind that "there has been a formalized transatlantic cooperation between Europe and America (either under the Atlantic Charter of 1941 or the New Transatlantic Agenda of 1995) as well as between Asia and North America (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation founded in 1989 or subsequent Trans-Pacific Partnership founded in 2005), there should logically be a balancing harmony with formal establishment of the Eurasian dialogue (i.e. ASEM founded in 1996)." (Beroun, 2013)

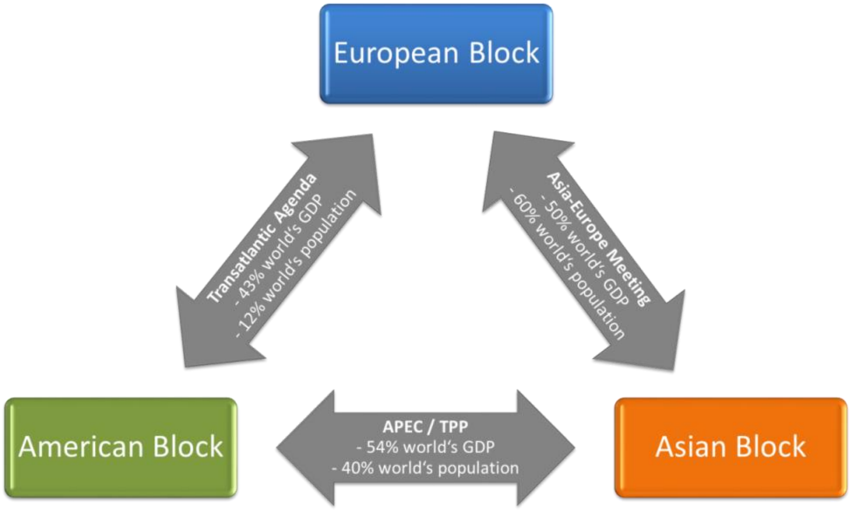
To sum up, "ASEM may be read either as an attempt to balance the role of the US in the region (particularly as a result of the EU's

[17] Respecting the recent economic development and given the strengthened intraregional relations within the countries of the Triad regions, we can aggregate these countries in relation to their respective regions, i.e. North America, Europe and East Asia.

being refused observer status to APEC) or as a structural necessity to develop the third side of the EU-US-Asia triangle" (Gilson, 2002, p. 8). Such a triadic occurrence primarily demonstrates the added value through ASEM and also theoretical justification for the application of interregionalism as "a triadic phenomenon, driven by the mutually reinforcing processes of globalization and regionalization" (Rüland et al, 2006, p. 298). Finally, we can simplify the Triad process of natural balancing in the following economic interpretation.

Figure 1: Interregional Triadic Equilibrium

European Block (EU), American Block (North America), Asian Block (ASEAN + 3)



Source: Author's elaboration on the basis of economic statistics available at the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission (2012) (Beroun, 2013).

As we have researched earlier, we can outline four fundamental postulates supporting the need for balancing theory as a major contribution to interregionalism (Beroun, 2013). These postulates also translate intothe definition framework for understanding the meaning of the word “crisis” in the context of the ASEM process.

1. Complicated intraregional relations in East Asia burdened with historical suspicion, nationalism, economic protectionism,and security dilemmas make further integration impossible (Friedberg, 1994, pp. 5-33).
2. Incomplete (revisionist) hegemony of the US due to its unclear focus on the region (being in Afghanistan or Iraq) and due to its economic difficulties since 2008 question the traditional security guaranties provided by the US in North-East Asia since World War II (Mastanduno, 2003, pp. 141-170).
3. China is considered as a revisionist and generally dissatisfied desiring to restore its traditional regional hegemony through the tributary system (Shambaugh, 2006, pp. 23-47).
4. The world is turning into a G-2 model of economic and political dominance of the United States and China and greatly marginalized Europe owing to its crisis.

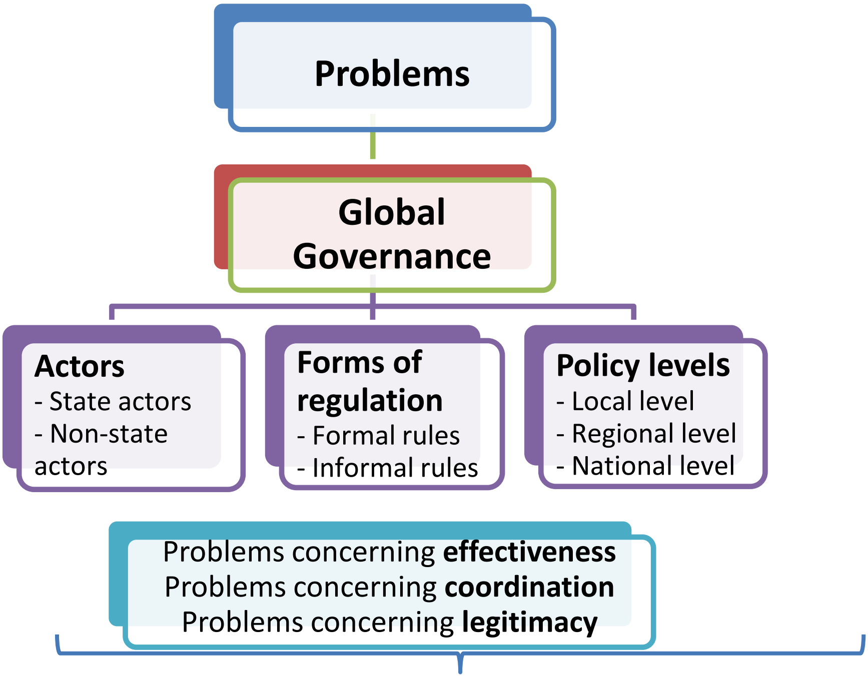
Nevertheless, despite the fact that majority of the authors dealing with the Asia-Europe Meeting accept the trilateral concept of balancing and also despite the fact that the link between Europe and Asia is the weakest one, they fail to examine other (mainly neoliberal) aspectsof this Triad. For instance, Julie Gilson says that:

> *"in the case of Asia-Europe relations, a structural triangular framework offers an even more convincing means of seeing the growth of regions in Asia and Europe as a necessary corollary to globalising trends."*(Gilson, 2002, p. 9)

Therefore, we will focus on the institutionalist narrative as a response to this one-sided balancing interpretation in the following text. In this perspective, we will evaluate how ASEM attempts to tackle the crisis in its understanding.

As an organizing principle we will use the structure of the global (multi-level) governance as drawn by HolgerMürle who starts the analysis with a certain problem that needs to be solved at the level of global (multi-level) governance (Mürle, 1998, p. 5). Depending on the actors involved in the solution, different forms of regulation at different policy levels are taken.

Figure 2: Elements of Global Governance (author's translation)



Source: Holger Mürle, Global Governance: Literaturbericht und Firschungsfragen (Mürle, 1998, p. 5).

To conclude, we will evaluate the ASEM process as a process designed by state actors who cooperate on the basis of informal (non-binding) rules at a(n) (inter)regional level. Finally, from the perspective of effectiveness, coordination and legitimacy, we will evaluate how such collaboration between two regions helps to transform other regions or the global community.

Empirical Implications: Qualitative Analysis of the ASEM Chair's Statement

As we have already indicated above, the informal Asia-Europe Meeting does not have a Secretariat that would produce any binding documents or secondary legislation. Therefore, the most important document is the so-called Chair's Statement that is signed by all 51 representatives of the ASEM partners. This quasi-doctrinal Statement is supposed to conclude all activities of the previous two-year ASEM presidency, demonstrate further progress of the ASEM process and to set the agenda for the following two years.

In the following section, we will conducted a qualitative comparative analysis of last two Chair's Statements concluding the 8th ASEM Summit in Brussels in 2010 (ASEM8, 2010), including an accompanying economic declaration, and the 9th ASEM Summit in

Vientiane in 2012 (ASEM9, 2012). These years have been chosen also with regard to the ongoing financial and economic crisis. It will be interesting to see whether the crisis had any impact on the interregional process.

All in all, the analysis attempts to illustrate whether there is any qualitative shift in the definition of the topics discussed, in the depth or extent of related issues and ASEM's responses. We will use the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement as a reference base for comparison with the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement. For clarity, we will quote directly the two Statements. Also, given the fact that the ASEM process is based on three pillars, the entire chapter will similarly be divided into three sections (i.e. economic, political and cultural cooperation).

Assessment of the Economic Pillar

The economic pillar as an initial source of the interregional process is one of the most important elements of the Asia-Europe Meeting. Concerning the analysis of the Final Statements, we will divide the economic chapter into two parts (i.e. global economic governance and sustainable development).

Global Economic Governance

Already at the beginning of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, it is quite remarkable to see that there is a special economic declaration attached which is called "Brussels Declaration on More Effective Global Economic Governance: Towards More Effective Global Economic Governance" (ASEM 8 Declaration, 2010). Given the fact that it is the result of the previous meeting of economic and finance ministers representing the ASEM partners, it also shows an obvious concern of the decision-makers regarding the ongoing economic and financial crisis. Moreover, this Declaration is attached to the main economic chapter of the Statement. Therefore, the core of the economic part of the main ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is based mainly on issues relating to sustainable development. This division can be considered as unique also given the fact that the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement is not accompanied by any special declaration and so the economic chapter remains fully united.

The ASEM 8Declaration stressed that the economic crisis not only revealed fundamental weaknesses in the global economic and financial system, but is also showed the economic interdependence among the world's economies. As a result, the Ministers agreed on giving:

> *"a new momentum to the cooperation between Europe and Asia with a view to promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, restoring market confidence, strengthening the resilience and the transparency of the financial system, reforming the financial sector, contributing to the reform of the international financial institutions and spurring economic growth in developing countries".* (ASEM 8 Declaration, 2010, p. 1)

But how can be these ambitious goals achieved through the ASEM process?First, the Ministers signed who the ASEM 8 Declaration stressed the need for "a strong, sustainable and balanced growth and inclusive economies in Asia and in Europe" based on an equal cooperation of all ASEM partners. Given the high public deficits, non-sustainable debts and development gaps, they also expressed their commitment "to strengthen the sources of growth and to conduct structural reforms". Owing to the diversity of global economy, they admitted that "policy actions must take account of possible spill-over effects and imbalances".

When we look closer at the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, its major economic part entitled "Reinforcing Economic Partnership" is also devoted to the challenges stemming from the current economic and financial crisis and to the need to further liberalize world trade in accordance with the Doha Round. In desiring an overall economic recovery, the leaders of ASEM 9 repeatedly stressed:

> *"the need for Asia and Europe to promote a closer engagement toward stronger and more dynamic partnership in addressing the current global crisis as well as paving the road in creating a stronger, more sustainable and balanced global growth".* (ASEM 9, 2012, p. 2)

Furthermore, they repeated the principles of their closer cooperation, respecting pro-growth policies, continuing fiscal consolidation. They also noted the significance of growth and employment policiestaking into account the social dimension, and finally, they commended the ongoing debates in this respect. To sum up, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement does not bring any new significant elements in this regard and it only summarises what was already said at the 2010 ASEM 8 Summit.

Apart from the so called stimulus packages, the Ministers also reaffirmed in the ASEM 8 Declaration that “priority should be given to restoring market confidence and preserving recovery momentum (…), while containing inflationary pressures”. At the same time, credibility, crisis prevention, stability and certainty in the world economy should then be achieved through structural adjustment, financial safety nets and clearly communicated plans for fiscal consolidation, fiscal sustainability and economic growth protection. In this regard, the Ministers endorsed close cooperation with G-20 countries and the inclusion of the Asian Chiang Mai Initiative as well as the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism. In addition, macroeconomic shocks should be mitigated through “sound macroeconomic and financial policies”. The ministers also put emphasis on the reforms of financial regulation (mainly the regulation of financial derivatives), supervision, financial institutions, crisis management, or information exchange so as to achieve “a more efficient, resilient and reliable financial environment”. They also stressed “the importance of agreeing internationally a single set of high-quality accounting standards, applicable globally”.

A key part of the ASEM 8 Declaration is also devoted to the reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In order “to improve its credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness” and to “to adequately reflect the relative weight and responsibilities of the IMF members in the world economy,” the Ministers supported the continuation of the debate about an IMF quota reform that should in the end lead to reinforcement of the institution as well as to a stronger voting power of emerging markets and developing countries by at least 5%. Last but not least, they also expressed their support for increasing the voting power of developing and transition countries in the World Bank by 4.59 % compared to the 2008 level.

Concerning the ASEM 9 Chair’s Statement, the high representatives called again for “a reform of international financial institutions and global economic governance” and ambiguouslyacknowledged “the necessity of further strengthening inter-regional financial cooperation between Asia and Europe”. In this context, they only repeated the principles of economic recovery multilateral cooperation as well as the reform of the financial sector. Finally, they reconfirmed their commitment to reform the IMF as already mentioned above, and to strengthen surveillance framework through the increase of available resources.

The final part of the ASEM 8 Declaration deals with the efforts to further open markets, liberalize trade and thus to “encourage more sustainable models of development, benefit developing countries and reduce poverty.” In this regard, the Ministers supported various initiatives related to “market access, cross-border investments, international assistance, actions on debts and technology transfers“.Furthermore, expecting “powerful economic stimulus for global sustained recovery”, they called for prompt conclusion of the WTO Doha Development Agenda and refused any protectionism and barriers to trade and investments. Also, they encouraged “deepening economic integration within and between both regions as a means to global recovery”. Finally, they recognised the importance of consultations and coordination among the ASEM and G-20 and various multilateral fora.

Finally, the ASEM 9 Chair’s Statement similarly underlined the importance of trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation. In this regard, they rhetorically endorsed deeper collaboration within the WTO system as well as their intention to bring the Doha Development Agenda to its conclusion. Apart from that, the representatives repeated their commitment "to enhance inter-regional investment and trade flows through the market economy, open multilateral trading system, non-discriminatory liberalisation and open regionalism". By praising various multinational fora and seminars, they also underlined "the importance of enhancing investment flows between Asia and Europe". Given the objective to deepen economic relations as well as development cooperation between Europe and Asia, the leaders also put certain emphasis on intra and interregional connectivity projects (including Public Private Partnerships), which is basically the only new element in relation to the previous ASEM 8 Declaration.

Sustainable Economic Development

Given the two recent Final Statements of the Asia-Europe Meeting, the issues associated with sustainable economic development play a crucial role in the ASEM economic pillar. Concerning the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, the triad of objectives regarding the economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection are "the three mutually reinforcing and interdependent pillars of sustainable development leading to greater human well-being". Additionally, the leaders confirmed the importance of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As regards the economic development pillar, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement basically summarises the above mentioned ASEM 8 Declaration by explicitly endorsing reforms leading to economic growth, trade facilitation and liberalization of domestic as well as international markets, completion of the WTO Doha Development Agenda, sustainable development policies respecting trade and development, environmentally-oriented and efficiency-oriented innovation, research and information exchange and the like. The only addition to this part is a certain accent on opening global and domestic agricultural markets and corresponding agricultural policies and programs ensuring sustainable food security as a means to reduce poverty. They even expressed an ambitious yet questionable vision to "phase out export subsidies, including through the WTO Doha-Round negotiations".

In the case of the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, it primarily summarises main elements of the previous ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, including the triad structure of sustainable economic development. Also, it highlights various accompanying international initiatives. In this regard, the ASEM representatives pointed out "the urgency of the establishment of the intergovernmental open-ended working group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". However, in relation to the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement adds a descriptive chapter on food and energy security and water resources management. The ASEM leaders rhetorically endorsed their commitment to "promote sustainable food security in terms of availability, accessibility, diversity, utilization and to prevent further deforestation".

Also, they acknowledged the close relationship between food security and climate change and thus they underlined the need for "fair and sustainable access to, and use of, water and land and promote the improvement of water productivity in water scarce areas". Apart from encouraging the increase of production and productivity through the promotion of new investments and support for common actions, agreements, international conferences or involvement of a broad variety of actors, we can hardly notice any common binding actions specifically driven by ASEM in the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement. In this regard, the ASEM leaders rather rhetorically endorsed the importance of energy security, efficiency, and research on new and renewable energy resources as well as environmentally friendly technologies. Finally, they reasserted "collective efforts to promote sustainable usage and management of water resources" and related seminars and informal meetings organised under the ASEM framework. Though, there is not word about a joint position on the ongoing climate change conference.

As far as the second pillar – social cohesion – is concerned, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement mainly refers to "the creation of prosperity and on the equitable distribution of income". The ASEM representatives considered job creation as a key element in this regard. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of various policy principles, such as the facilitation of labour migration, protection of the rights of workers, effective dialogue between social partners, job training and specific education, reforms of pension systems, putting into practice corporate social responsibility and social safety nets, ensuring livelihood security through poverty alleviation and so forth. However, apart from the vague pronouncement of the significance of close cooperation with the International Labour Organization and World Health Organization, the high representatives de facto do not offer any concrete solutions how all these ambitious goals (apart from respecting them) should be achieved or what role the Asia-Europe Meeting should play in the respective implementation. In addition, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement did not show any progress in this regard. It only repeats vaguely general values of employment and social policies.

In terms of the third and last pillar – environmental protection – the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement underlined "the necessity to address global climate change and recognized in this regard the centrality and legitimacy of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process". This basically explains why the ASEM leaders vaguely called for reaching a "fair, effective and comprehensive legally binding outcome under the mandate of the Bali Roadmap agreed in 2007". In this regard, they also supported significant cuts in global emissions. Again, a comprehensive ASEM-led approach towards the protection of environment is rather on a thin ice. Likewise, leaders "welcomed the commitments of the EU partners, Japan, Australia and New Zealand (…)",which clearly proves the preference of an approach led by individual nation-states (or by the EU as such).

In addition, the ASEM 8 representatives noted – in compliance with climate protection and the growing interdependence of states on energy – the centrality of energy efficiency and security, renewable energy, market approach, technological advancement, corresponding information exchange and so forth. Finally, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement highlights the importance of sustainable forest and water resources management and corresponding international actions, biological diversity, promotion of green and low-carbon economy or contribution of the private sector and the involvement of civil society to equivalent policies.

The vagueness of the language used is even more apparent in the subsequent ASEM 9 Chair's Statement where the leaders noted very briefly the need to "enhance cooperation in tackling climatechange" or to work together "to develop a protocol, anotherlegal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force as mandated by COP17 of the UNFCCC". Again, this rhetorical remark hardly determines the role of ASEM in this policy practice.

In the final part of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, the high representatives focused on the future of Asia-Europe sustainable development cooperation. Again, they repeated the centrality of Millennium Development Goals, while pointing out the use of creative financingmodalities in accordance with adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency principles, and preservation of the total amount of development assistance notwithstanding the world economic and financial crisis. Moreover, they endorsed information and good practise exchange. Also, they supported the use of "triangular forms ofcooperation that combine resources and expertise from donor and recipient countries in theinterest of efficient projects".

Assessment of the Political Pillar

The chapter dealing with the political dialogue of the ASEM process is divided into two parts in both statements, namely the global and regional issues. The same structure will also be applied in the following qualitative analysis of these Statements.

Contemporary Global Issues

The chapter on contemporary global issues is a substantial part of every final ASEM Statement. The first part of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is dealing with piracy (mainly at the sea off the coast of Somalia). It is quite clear from the Statement how important this issue is due to its negative impact on the trade between Asia and Europe. In 2010, the ASEM leaders underscored the crucial role of international law as well as the actions of United Nations in the international efforts against piracy and in safeguarding freedom and security of the seas.Moreover, they called for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and of other relevant agreements related to combating piracy and armed robbery, criminalization of piracy and armed robbery at seas. Also, the ASEM leaders supported the exchanges of best practices on anti-piracy in conjunction with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), training and sharing of intelligence among ASEM partners.

Also, a clear emphasis is put on the broad concept of security by underlining the aspects related to addressing the root causes of piracy, human security, protection of victims of piracy or eliminating the sources of poverty leading to piracy. Despite the fact that both European as well as Asian leaders refer to “outstanding examples of Europe and Asia working together on an issue of common interest”, there is no clear evidence that specifically ASEM helped to tackle the piracy at the sea off the coast of Somalia. The cooperation is rather based on the coordination of actions driven by the UN or by nation-states and their individual activities related to the prosecution of and disciplinary measures against pirates.

The ASEM 9 Chair's Statement also mentions the problem of piracy. Nevertheless, it basically uses exactly the same languages and does not show any further development in this regard, apart from the fact that leaders are calling for "a comprehensive approach, including measures on land". In addition, the ASEM leaders praised the Operation Atalanta, also known as the European Union Naval Force Somalia (EU – NAVFOR – ATALANTA) despite the fact that it is a military operation undertaken and financed primarily by the Naval Force of the European Union.

The next chapter of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is dealing with fighting terrorism and combating transnational organized crime. Again, the ASEM representatives reaffirmed the primary role of the UN initiatives and other international regimes in this regard and supported corresponding measures and strategies in accordance with international law, the UN Charter, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and conventions, and finally in accordance with the principles of protection of victims of acts of terrorism. Even though the ASEM representatives called for "disseminating best practices in support of the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (…)",we will not learn about how that should be achieved concretely. Moreover, they expressed their concerns over transnational organized crime, illicit drug trafficking and the impact of corruption on trade, development, intellectual property rights, peace, security and the state of human rights protection. As far as the subsequent ASEM 9 Chair's Statement is concerned, it only notes the conclusions of the ASEM Counter Terrorism Conference as well as the United Nations' leading role in this regard. Also, the leaders reaffirmed rhetorically their pledge to boost the cooperation in fighting and preventing transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons and illicit narcotic drug trafficking.

Afterwards, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement underlines the need to discuss issues concerning human security, human rights and democracy in accordance with the United Nations rules, international law and democratic governance practice. Yet, given the problematic situation of the protection of human rights in many of the ASEM countries, it is quite startling that "they expressed their satisfaction with the dialogue carried out by partners through the informal ASEM Seminars on Human Rights held annually since 1998". Concerning the protection of human rights in the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, only various international initiatives and previous fora and seminars were briefly pointed out. In conclusion, apart from the alleged cooperation with civil society and international arena, the partners do not offer any solutions how the ASEM process could contribute to these issues.

A special attention of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is paid to disaster prevention, disaster relief and associated negative impact of climate change. By underlining "humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence" with regard to disaster relief, the ASEM representatives also stressed the importance of:

> *"disaster risk reduction through decreased exposure to risk, reduced vulnerability of humans and their property, sound environmental management, local capacity building and improved readiness in case of disasters".*(ASEM 8, 2010, p. 12)

Regardless of explicitly cited possible cooperation within ASEM on:

> *"risk assessment, risk reduction strategies, early warning mechanisms, management capacities, search and rescue capacities, infrastructure development associated with relief and post disaster recovery, and other response activities (…)",*(ASEM 8, 2010, p. 12)

(…) we can hardly identify any concrete contribution of the ASEM process. Similarly, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement only summarises undertaken discussions and existing international fora on related topics. Finally, it specifically highlights the need for "collective preparedness and response to disasters and to reduce losses caused by man-made and natural disasters".

Another relatively significant part of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is devoted to the reform of the United Nations system. The basic idea is to "effectively address today's global challenges and ensure effective support for its members, particularly in addressing the needs of developing countries". Despite general unwillingness of the Western powers to make a compromise on this issue, the ASEM leaders agreed superficially on achieving "a more representative, more efficient and more effective UN Security Council". Furthermore, they called further for "a revitalized General Assembly, a strengthened ECOSOC, a well-managed Secretariat and effective, streamlined specialized agencies in the interest of system-wide coherence and increased sense of ownership on the part of the world community". As regards the ASEM 9, the Chair's Final Statement likewise puts emphasis on the same issuesbasically, while adding some aspects in terms of wider support for developing countries, general efficiency and effectiveness, financial stability or regular policy reviews. Again, no concrete shared steps with regard to ASEM's activities were mentioned.

Finally, a more concrete part of the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is dealing with nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Naturally, the ASEM representatives recognised the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a major threat to international peace and security and as a mutual concern of the ASEM partners. By supporting the international cooperation and various agreements and conventions (such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its Action Plan, New START Treaty, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty or various conferences or specific activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency), they rhetorically endorsed their commitment to "the long term objective of a world free of nuclear weapons and of other weapons of mass destruction", including "nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation". In the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, this chapter is extended by noting the importance of nuclear safety in connection with the 2011 disaster at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Otherwise, the leaders recapitulate analogic activities, conferences and summits related to this topic. In conclusion, the latter Statement does not bring any added value in relation to the previous one.

Contemporary Regional Issues

A significant part of the political pillar of both ASEM Statements is concerned with regional issues. On one hand, the Statements focus on purely Eurasian issues. For instance, in the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement, the representatives agreed that interregional "cooperative mechanisms are a force for peace, stability, prosperity, social development and cohesion". Furthermore, they stressed "the importance of effective regional architectures of security and cooperation in Asia and Europe based on mutual respect (…)".

In the succeeding part, the ASEM leaders recalled the increasing international role of the European Union after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009). Similarly, they recognized "the centrality of ASEAN in regional cooperation in Asia" and also the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter (2008) and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia (TAC) as an essential acceleratory factor of the ASEAN integration towards the ASEAN Community (2015). However, given the fact that these initiatives are of a rather intraregional (local) character, it is quite remarkable that they are mentioned in the Statement of the interregional Asia-Europe Meeting. Again, relevance of this part is quite questionable. In this regard, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement does not bring any new significant elements while it is considerably shortened at the same time.

On the other hand, various issues concerning contemporary international affairs are mentioned in both Statements. All in all, the ASEM leaders always refer to values such as peace, security, stability, compliance with international law standards, rule of law, democracy and the like. As far as the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement is concerned, it specifically focuses on the need to find a "comprehensive negotiated solution to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program". Also, reps called for a prompt renewal of the dialogue with the international community and for the compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and with requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Similarly, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement:

> *"called upon Iran to comply fully and without delay with all of its obligations under the relevant Resolutions of the UN*

> *Security Council, and to meet the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors and fully co-operate with the IAEA".* (ASEM 9, 2012, p. 12)

In connection with the situation in Afghanistan, the leaders representing the ASEM 8Summit praised the organization of recent parliamentary elections. Additionally, they expressed their consent with the "international support for the Afghan government's efforts to achieve peace and stability". Last but not least, the ASEM representatives underlined the need to assist to Afghanistan in providing technical support and in helpingto control the narcotics business and tackle the activities linked to international terrorism. The ASEM 9 Chair's Statement then underlines only the:

> *"support for reconstruction efforts, reconciliation and peaceful transition to democratic government in Afghanistan, including its path to self-reliance following the transition to Afghan-led security in 2014".* (ASEM 9, 2012, p. 15)

As far as the recent developments in the Middle East are concerned, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statement supported the continuation of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian and the involvement of international partners contributing to these talks. Also, the Statement encourages the establishment of:

> *"an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, both in a peaceful and stable region".* (ASEM 8, 2010, p. 16)

Last but not least, the leaders openly criticised the Israeli settlers for expanding and enlarging their settlements and called for a legal settlement under the international law. While acknowledging that the current situation in Gaza is not sustainable, the leaders also called for a comprehensive approach based on the involvement of all countries in completing the Middle East Peace Process. In terms of the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, the representatives repeated their support for a two-state solution and warned on "the current financial difficulties of the Palestinian Authority and called on the international community to urgently support the Palestinian Authority (…)".Interestingly enough, there is no concrete word about the situation in Syria or any comment on the Arab Spring revolutions.

While the question of Myanmar was completely omitted in the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement, the leaders of the 8th ASEM Summit endorsed the indication of democratic transition of this Southeast Asian state and they also expressed their support for the involvement of the international community. Both Statements also pay special attention to the situation in the Korean Peninsula. They basically underscored the need for a peace and stability settlement in Korea through the continuation of Six-Party Talks and they also urged "all parties to fulfil their commitments" concerning international law, UN Security Council resolutions as well as the prohibition of proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Assessment of the Cultural Pillar

The very last and most concise chapter of both the ASEM Chair's Statements is dealing with culturalaspectsof interregional cooperation in Europe and Asia. Concretely, the ASEM 8 Chair's Statementdivides this chapter into three points, i.e. people to people, visibility and finally the future of ASEM.For instance, the leaders promoted rhetorically:

> *"further people-to-people contacts and interaction between businesses, merchants, academics, students, opinion makers, media representatives, culture professionals, civil society representatives and local and regional leaders."*(ASEM 8, 2010, p. 18)

In this regard, they also praised tourism as a cultural factor of inter-connectivity between Europe and Asia. In the subsequent paragraphs, the leaders mentioned the importance of other non-governmental dialoguessuchas the Parliamentary Partnership Meetings, People's Forum orfinally the Business Forum. In terms of education cooperation, they welcomed the establishment of the ASEM Education Secretariat in Bonn and Cooperation Center in Seoul as well as continuation of the Education Ministers meetings, Bologna Policy fora, Erasmus Mundus, Trans-Eurasian Information Network for research and education exchanges and finally the so called ASEM-DUO fellowship programs.Finally, the reps emphasized that:

> *"joint science and technology initiatives play a central role in achieving scientific, technological and social advances in the face of common challenges, in particular the one of advancing sustainable development."* (ASEM 8, 2010, p. 18)

Regarding cultural cooperation, the representatives not only endorsed higher involvement of government and civil society in this area, but they also stressed that:

> *"raising awareness about cultural heritage and about treasures of the past constituted a key step towards overcoming ignorance and prejudice and towards promoting mutual understanding and cooperation."* (ASEM 8, 2010, p. 19)

In addition, they applauded an exhibition about the coexistence of Asia and Europe, the activities of the Asia-Europe Foundation. Also, the praised the "significant increase in ASEM's internal and external visibility".Given the quasi-doctrinal character of the ASEM Final Statement, it is a bit ridiculousthat they expressed satisfaction use of the ASEM's logo by Belgium during its Presidency of the 8th ASEM summit.

Finally, another interesting but rather shallow chapter is concerned with the so called dialogue of cultures and civilizations. Due to its allegedcontribution to "the maintenance of international peace and security",this subchapter was initially placed in the political pillar. Yet, leaders symbolically recalled the importance of international fora and various “ongoing ASEM initiatives constituting significant contributions to the enrichment of Asian and European cultures and faiths and to the deepening of Asia-Europe relations”. In this regard, they most probably referred to the activities of the above mentioned Asia-Europe Foundation.

Concerning the 9th ASEM Summit, the associatedStatement has many more details than the previous ASEM 8 Chair’s Statement. Also, the structure of the culture-related chapter seems to be more sophisticated given its segmentation into parts such as the people-to-people interactions, human resources development and education, employment and social policies, cultural cooperation, tourism and the Asia-Europe Foundation. Nevertheless, given the rather vague and repetitive language, it is hard to detect any significant advancement in relation to the previous ASEM 8 Chair’s Statement.

An added value is a clearaccent on human resources development and educationthat was previously part of the economic part of the ASEM 8 Chair’s Statement.In this regard, the leaders highlight these issues as factors of poverty reduction and socio-economic development. Accordingly, they discuss various opportunities for improvement, such as capacity building, training, vocational education or lifelong learning.

Also, tourism as a new element of the Statement should contribute to:

> *"promoting of betterunderstanding and enhancing connectivity between peoples of the two regions, as well asto job creation, economic growth and development, and they agreed to further strengthencooperation in this area."* (ASEM 9, 2012, p. 14)

Similarly, the ASEM 9 Chair's Statement highlights "the cultural and economic contributions made by migrants and migrant workers to receiving societies and their communities of origin". Nevertheless, apart from describing various general aspects of migration such as the economic importance in the current crisis, protection of human rights, informal discussions and so forth, the Statement does not specify clearly how ASEM should be involved in this process. In addition, the ASEM 9leaders stressed the significance of the interfaith dialog with respect to:

> *"its contribution to promoting social cohesion, peace, and development in the context of increasing societal*

interdependence and religious and cultural diversity in Asia and Europe." (ASEM 9, 2012, p. 14)

Finally, they specifically mentioned the good practice of an inter-religious dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance, cultural cooperation and exchanges, diversity of faiths, religions, languages and cultures. Again, they noted the outcomes of various international dialogues as well as those organized under the framework of the ASEM process.

In conclusion, despite the seemingly deeper and more detailed structure of the third culture-related pillar, continuing extremely vague and shallow language gives an impression of a very low progress or evenstagnation over the past two years.

Reflection of Interregionalism: ASEM and the Crisis (2010 – 2012)

In the followingchapter, we will focus on the final reflectionof the ASEM interregional process during the crisis. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part draws final conclusions from the qualitative analysis of the ASEM Chair's Statements in the light of the initial ambitious plans and strategies. The second part represents a contribution to the debate over the potentialdevelopment and direction of interregionalism as such. In this regard, we will also demonstrate how an alternativeexample of interregional cooperation fits into the debate over changing the concept of interregionalism.

Limits of Interregionalism in the ASEM Context

Firstly, after almost two decades of its existence,the Asia-Europe Meeting has not fulfilled the greatly ambitious European Commission's Communications intent to establish a "comprehensive strategic framework for our relations with Asia and its subregions in the coming decade" (European Commission, 2001, p. 3).

Secondly, the ASEM process lacks an implementation body to determine and supervise how to fulfil its ambitious goals and visions and what resources to use to bring the plans to life. In this regard, the European Commission's 2001 Communication envisages a more formalized and coordinated cooperative framework, but the Commission has yet to bring the framework into practice:

> *"in order for this Strategic Framework to be fully effective, it is essential that there is a proper consistency between the*

> *objectives being set, and the resources available to meet them (both in terms of staff and operational resources in headquarters and in the field, and in terms of the budgetary resources available for our cooperation programmes).”* (European Commission, 2001, p. 26)

Thirdly, regarding the Chair’s Statements, despite the ongoing financial and economic crisis, there is no qualitative advancement between the 8th ASEM Summit in Brussels (2010) and the 9th ASEM Summit in Vientiane (2012). By reading the Statements, we can only identify issues and problems that are generally important for both regions. Rather than a platform for action, ASEM is limited to beinga platform of defining of key issues.

Concerning the economic pillarsofboth Statements, they only summarise in a shallow and vague way various fundamental principles of economic governance and their positive effects on individual countries. Even though it would perfectly fit into those values and principles, we cannot expect a clear plan to launch the negotiations for a Eurasian Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Therefore, unsurprisingly, the EU and its Asian partners prefer to liberalize trade on a bilateral level, as is the case of the EU-Korea FTA, EU-Singapore FTA, EU-Japan FTA and so forth. Apart from changes in the order of selected economic chapters, updates in other chapters or different emphasis on the constantly proclaimed “need for further cooperation”, the economic part of the ASEM Statements has not reached any visible progress between the crisis years of 2010 and 2012.

Regarding the politicalpillarsof both Statements are concerned, there is a certain emphasis on various determinants influencing the political and security environment, such as human (livelihood) security, energy security, food security, economic stability and so on. As we have already argued earlier:

> *“The security concept of ASEM is inherently a concept of preventive diplomacy at the most universal and non-interventional level, and concept of a shared collective identity and values (economic, political or cultural) rather than a unilateral protection of binding goals and policies. It is thus obvious that the ASEM concept is an extended concept of structural (root) prevention represented by the Copenhagen School.”*(Lund, 1996, p. 37)

In summary, the principal contribution of ASEM to Eurasian political relations is based on defining key issues and on rhetorical support for confidence-building measures (CBM) between Europe and Asia, compliance with international law, shared values and creation of socially constructed security community (Buzan, 1998), and activities within the UN system, multilateralism or soft power (Nye, 2005). However, given the complete lack of operational tools and formality, the interregional cooperation in the context of ASEM is restricted only to classification of current problems and does not disclose the ASEM's role.

Concerning the cultural pillar, its language is noticeably empty regarding continuous enlargement through new partners becoming members of the interregional process. Even though the enlargement might appear to be a political success, in the end it leads to even greater shallowness and informality of the interregional cooperation outlined in both Statements. Defining a Eurasian cultural space in such a context is thus extraordinarily awkward.

In conclusion, the shallow, repetitive and rather ambiguous Statements clearly show that in its current interregional format, ASEM cannot go beyond defining problems. Rather than becoming a "comprehensive strategic framework," the ASEM interregional process turned into a "talk shop". Therefore, the ASEM process, which is based on a neorealist narrative, fails in the proceeding ways to follow HolgerMürle's structure of global governance (Mürle, 1998, p. 5):

1. We are aware of the fact that there is areglobal challenges to be tackled through a multi-level or global governance framework (i.e. the four above mentioned postulates, G-2 model of international relation, economic crisis and various misbalances, piracy, climate change, protectionism, unsustainable forms of economic growth, high rates of unemployment etc.).
2. We know the actors that should tackle the challenges (i.e. 51 European as well Asian partners).
3. These actors have informal rules of regulationonly (i.e. non-binding) and cannot solve the challenges in a proactive and efficient way.
4. Therefore, the (inter)regional policy narrative at the level of global or multi-level governance cannot be applied given the lack of effectiveness, coordination and legitimacy.

In conclusion, ASEM is too flexible (in terms of agenda-setting) and too inclusive (in terms of enlargement).Additionally, given the incapability of ASEM to react proactively to various challenges influencing its Member States, we cannot consider this interregional framework to be a fully-fledged contribution to multi-level or global governance. Interregionalism in the context of the Asia-Europe Meeting will not result in the establishment of the "Eurasian Century" of leadership.

Furthermore, ASEM can hardly strengthen or substitute the missing link between Europe and Asia as efficiently as it has been achieved in the case of APEC. Furthermore, it is quite improbable that ASEM could balance the G-2 model of international relations.

Neoliberal Narrative as a Response

Considering the current limits of the Asia-Europe Meeting as an interregional structure based predominantly on soft balancing, we can determinea number of crucial consequences from the prevailing debate over interregionalism.

Firstly, despite the existence of obvious challenges and problems among the main actors, the contemporary debates that concentrate on the neorealist interpretation of interregionalism fail to enhance the interregional structure beyond shallow and vague balancing statements typical of ASEM.

Secondly, the neorealist debate excludes formal structures that are not primarily state-driven. However, ASEM's non-interventionist-based interregional framework did not lead to a more efficient, responsive and functional cooperation that would upgrade current bilateral relations among the member states or multilateral relations with international institutions. It is evident that ASEM lacks the socialisation aspect necessary for organizing and coordinating supranational processes (Risse, 2009, p. 174).

In light of ASEM's shortcomings, we strongly recommend that the alternative approaches of international relations – neoliberalism and constructivism – be strengthened in the current debate over interregionalism. For the interregional context of ASEM, we will refer mainly to the institutional narrative (descending liberalism), which is based on thepremise that institutions (e.g. an eventual "ASEM Secretariat" or any kind of headquarters) will control and manage the agenda set by governments, formalize the initially non-binding policy processes, foster communication and socialisation through spillover effect and mobilization of resources, bargain jointly profitable arrangements and mutually beneficial compromises, and finally take responsibility for supervision and scrutiny over the quality of implementation of policies promoted on the interregional policy level. David Harvey further develops this concept by saying:

> *"Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices thatproposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individualentrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterizedby strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state isto create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. Thestate has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money."*(Harvey, 2007, p. 2)

In summary, such an institution would facilitate the continual reshaping and redefining of goals, policies, actions, and participants. Also, because ASEM is basically coordinated by politicians, the "ASEM Secretariat" as a coordinative body would not depend on different political cycles in countries and political lives of politicians.

Additionally, an “ASEM Secretariat” would go beyond a simple platform of information exchange and would help upgrade the interregional dialogue into a real interregional community – supraregionalism – that would provide extra support for continuity,collective patterns of behaviours and collective actions, historical path dependency, predictability, mediation,and finally it would strengthen the natural cooperative identity (social interaction), identification with the interregional process and self-reflection.

Furthermore,the concept of an efficient interregionalismwould be able to respond to the main four challenging postulates mentioned above. A formalized policy process can help mitigate security dilemmas in East Asia, reduce the risks of Washington’s disinterest in the region, find a place for China in the region by guaranteeing it a negotiation platform and reduce the risks of one-sided Asia-Pacific axis of influence and marginalisation of Europe.

We now need to ask ourselves a question how far the institutionalisation of an interregional process can go. The answer will mainly depend on the capability of creating norms that – as Peter Joachim Katzenstein argues – have binding, constitutive or regulatory effect (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 54).In the end, norms can at least lead to a common comprehension of standards and shape the interregional process with the purpose to decrease uncertainty and increase predictability of the system. Following this argument, in accordance with Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, we will outline three levels of institutionalisation (Hasenclever et al, 1997, pp. 14-17). The first level – behavioural – represents a loose regime that does not shape behaviours of its actors and has thus rather a limited impact (ASEM today). The second level – cognitive – promotes shared understanding and deeper and regular communication on the institutional basis (APEC Secretariat). On the third level – formal terms –formal international institutions are created with complex bureaucracy, strict rules and clearly defined decision-making processes (EU).

The most obvious objections to the third level of institutionalisation of the interregional process are the diversity of Asia, Asia's difficulties in closer integration of the region and insistence on non-interventionism. Even though we may argue that the ASEAN Community – inspired by the integration model of the EU – may pop up by 2015, we need to underline that the eventual institutional element in interregionalism would not imply integration as seen in the EU.Rather, it would imply a binding cooperative and coordinative framework and support mechanism for the high-level ASEM process with minimum budgetary demands and bureaucracy.

Since the ASEM process was also EU's reaction to APEC (i.e. another example of interregional process), we will look at the second level of institutionalisation which could serve as an inspirationfor ASEM:

> *"The APEC Secretariat is based in Singapore and operates as the core support mechanism for the APEC process. It provides coordination, technical and advisory support as well as information management, communications and public outreach services. The APEC Secretariat performs a central project management role, assisting APEC Member Economies and APEC fora with overseeing more than 250 APEC-funded projects. APEC's annual budget is also administered by the APEC Secretariat.*
>
> *The APEC Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director, Dr Alan Bollard. 2009 marked the last year when the position will be held on an annually rotating basis by an officer of*

Ambassadorial rank from the host economy. From 2010 the appointment has been made on a three-year fixed-term basis and is open to professional candidates from any of APEC's 21 member economies. The APEC Secretariat is staffed by a small team of program directors, seconded from APEC Member Economies. In addition, professional staff fulfil specialist and support functions at the APEC Secretariat."(APEC Secretariat, 2013)

Even though the APEC process is not a central subject of this paper, we will complete the theoretical picture by quoting Carlos Kuriyama who evaluates the empirical achievements of APEC and its role in the ongoing creation of an interregional free trade area under the frameworkof the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP):

"APEC is important for TPP as incubator of ideas that could be taken into account in the present negotiations. In the same way, TPP is relevant for APEC as one of many avenues to strengthen regional economic integration across the APEC region." (Kuriyama, 201, p. 3)

Given the clear focus on trade liberalisation, it remains to be seen if the ASEM process will also follow the second level of institutionalisation and result in a "Eurasian Partnership Agreement", as in the presented case of APEC and TPP.

Conclusion

Thepaper presented the basic ways of understanding the interregional interaction in the case of Asia-Europe Meeting in the crisis period 2010 – 2012. The main goal of the paperwas thus to evaluate interregionalism as a policy approach at the level of global (multi-level) governance with a particular focus on the Asia-Europe Meeting as given a case study (basic type of interregionalism). In addition, we intended to develop further the theoretical conceptualisation of interregionalism and to revive the stagnating debate over this concept.

Since its establishment in 1996, the Asia-Europe Meeting has developed from a conference into an ambitious process of regular interregional meetings comprising 49 Asian and European Member States and two international institutions.We defined interregionalism – contrary to the traditionallyaccepted approach among scholars based on neorealist and geopolitical narrative of interregionalism – as an applicable policy approach at the level of global (multi-level) governance.

By analyzing thoroughly the primary documents presented at the birth of the ASEM process, biannual Chair's Statements as well as real activitiescarried out by ASEM, we have concluded that the ASEM as an interregional bodyhas not fulfilled the key goals for which it was established almost two decades ago. The shallow, repetitive and rather ambiguous Statements clearly demonstrate that ASEM – in its current flexible and exclusively state-driven interregional framework – cannot go beyond defining problems in the global governance cycle, notwithstanding the ongoing economic and financial crisis. Rather than becoming a comprehensive strategic framework, the ASEM interregional process remains an ordinary debate club and confidence-building platform.

Therefore, with regard to the innovative neoliberalist (and partly constructivist) narrative, the ASEM leaders should consider to establishan institutional implementation body (ASEM Secretariat)to determine and supervise how to fulfillthe ambitious goals and visions and what resources to use to bring the plans to life. In the end, such a transformation of interregionalism might lead to the creation of rule-based (normative) supraregionalism. Also, given the similarities between the ASEM and APEC processes and the identical starting points related to their existence, ASEM leaders should find an inspiration in the APEC framework organized (alternative – advanced type of interregionalism) by the so-called APEC Secretariat.

In conclusion, ASEM is too flexible (in terms of agenda-setting) and too inclusive (in terms of enlargement).Given the incapability of ASEM to react proactively to various challenges influencing its Member States, we cannot consider this interregional framework to be a fully-fledged contribution to multi-level or global governance. Additionally, interregionalism in the context of the Asia-Europe Meeting will not result in the establishment of the "Eurasian Century" of leadership, despite the unquestionable need for more result-oriented policy patterns in this regard. Also, interregionalism as a policy approach cannot be reduced to a loose interaction of nation states or regions as it will require a properly organized cooperation framework to attain the advanced (institutionalized) type of interregionalism.Finally, the bilateral framework of cooperation between individual Asian and European states is much more efficient at this moment.

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A Model of Slovenian Ethical Comsumerism

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Abstract

This article begins with a review of recent theoretical views and positions onfair trade, consumer buying behaviour and ethical consumerism. In the empirical part we use the results of a quantitative survey of 253 Slovenian respondentsto develop a

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model of Slovenian fair trade consumer behaviour. The general attitude to fair tradewas found to bethe most important variable influencing buying behaviour and the knowledge about fair trade concepts the most important factor. In the conclusion we offer recommendations for futurestudies of ethical consumerism in Slovenia.

Keywords: fair trade, buying behaviour, ethical consumerism, business ethics, marketing

Introduction

Fair trade (FT hereafter) is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect and seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers, especially in the developing countries ("the South"). Organizations dealing with FT which are supported by consumers are actively engaged in supporting producers, awareness raising and organizing campaigns for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade (Umanotera, http://www.umanotera.org, 23/10/2010). FT creates conditions where people and producers in developing countries can develop and manage poverty. This cooperative action of FT is beneficial for producers because it allows them work, fair pay and subsistence. On the other hand, it allows consumers to purchase products that have a strong "ethical" touch and in this way promote and meet consumer needs for ethical consumerism, important concepts to inhabitants of developed nations (“the North”). Working Party for Solidarity and Social Economy FT offersthe following definition (Audet, 2004,1): "FT is an alternative form of trading, which is based on voluntarily accepted norms that respect the social rights of producers and workers and is at the same time protecting the environment.” On one hand, its aim is to improve the living conditions of small producers from the South through the trading system, which is based on fair prices and sincere and long-term trade relations. On the other hand, it seeks to change the existing rules of international trade by raising awareness and consumer education and by pressing the government through campaigns and lobbying. Changing the existing rules of international trade and consumer awareness is also an important part of its operation. FT works and brings multiple benefits into the international environment. It helps marginalized groups to survive with integrity and in this way protects them from monopoly companies that are not willing to pay the "fair price" for the purchase of products. Through the transmission of information to consumers it encourages "ethical consumerism", which is based on personal moral values of the consumer. It is often referred to as "an alternative form of trading." Why alternative? In order to operate successfully, FT tries to reduce the number of intermediaries and enables manufacturers the same basis and direct access to the market. It is therefore necessary to eliminate intermediaries in trade (because they collect fees for their intervention) or to reduce their number to a minimum. FT acts as a cooperative. International Federation of Cooperatives ICA has set the following definition of cooperatives: "Cooperative is an autonomous association of individuals who are voluntarily linked in order to meet common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations within the company they have jointly owned, democratically managed and controlled" (ICA 2003). Cooperative is an association that helps individuals achieve the objectives for which such individuals could not or would be very difficult to realise. Cooperative like clusters allows their members greater bargaining power in the market and a number of other benefits. The basic operating principles are: *voluntary and open membership, democratic member control,* *member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among co-operatives, care for confidentiality.*

Cooperatives work towards the sustainable development of their communities with the implementation of policies approved by the members (ICA 2003). FT operates as a system of cooperatives, which has clearly defined rules and principles. In order to avoid misuse of FT and its goodwill and purpose, the umbrella organization IFAT set 10 standards to be followed by all organizations of FT. IFAT closely monitors the implementation of these standards in practice and verifies that they are strictly observed. Enforcement and compliance with these standards is a prerequisite for the functioning of the system FT. We are talking about ten standards of FT: *creating market opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers, transparency and accountability, capacity building, promotion of FT, paying a fair price (fair price payment), gender-equality, better working conditions, regulated child labour, the care for environment, creating trade ties.*

When the FT principle was clearly set and standardized by the IFAT, the alternative trade organizations and product providers realize that it would be more recognizable if they formed a certification mark, which would be used on FT products and in this way ensure any products produced or grown by the principles of FT, which we presented in the previous section (Nicholls and Opal 2005, 127). To formalize a system of certification of FT products, it was necessary to develop a certification system that would be controlled by an independent certification agency, who received the title of "national labelling initiatives FT." That is why certification has become an important element of the FT movement. Today, the certificates are given worldwide to product of FT by one of 19 organizations for certification, operating under the auspices of theFLO CERT (Nicholls and Opal 2005, 128).

The first FT in Slovenia opened in Ljubljana, onDecember 10th, 2004. The second FT named »3 Muhe« was opened on May 7th, 2010 in Maribor (3 Muhe, 2010). Most products are imported through the Austrian and Italian EZA intermediary broker “CTM altromercato”. The market is also directly connected through the Humanitas with the organization "Kafuli" in Burkina Faso. Some of the products are imported directly from Africa and Nepal (Krier

2007, 95). In 2007, they started to import the FT products into the large commercial organizations in Slovenia like Mercator, Spar, Petrol, ELeclerc and Hofer. They all saw an option to spread strategy of social responsibility in selling the FT products. Mercator is importing products in collaboration with cooperative »Od Juga«, other major retailers import through other intermediaries.

Consumer decision-making models

The process of deciding has a very important place in the research of consumer behaviour. It is treated with special attention, because the result of the process of decision-making is either a purchase or no purchase of the product (Mumel,1999, 61).Most commonly used is the five-step model of the purchase decision-making process (Kotler, 2004; Potočnik, 2005).

Figure 1: Five-step model of consumerdecision-making process

Source: Kotler 2004; Potočnik 2005; Stokes 2002; Palmer 2000.

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (201, 71) add another two factors to the above presented five-step model of consumer's decision-making: pre-purchase evaluation of the alternatives and disposal of the product. The authors believe that the model presented above is the plan of consumer's mind and can be of great help to marketers to develop marketing, marketing communications and a sales plan. The model represents a course of action at the time of purchase decisions and shows how various internal and external sources can influence and are reflected in consumer's thinking, decision-making and behaviour (Blackwell et al., 2001, 71).

Potočnik (2005) and Kotler (2004) consider that the process of purchase decision-making begins when the customer finds a problem, an unmet need or desire. The need can also be triggered by an internal or external stimulation. "Finding out the need is a decisive stage in the process of purchase decision-making, because the buyer cannot pass on to the next level – information retrieval – until he realizes the problem, need or desire" (Potočnik, 2005, 47). Marketers need to know what the needs of a consumer are. We can also talk about the physiological and psychological needs. Thirst and hunger are physiological needs but the consumer can also satisfy his psychological need to help the poor by purchasing tea or sugar from FT. This is what the concept of FT is based on: with a purchase you can help yourself and the poor people from the South. Once a customer perceives an unmet need or a problem, he will start to search for information and solutions to meet the unmet need (Blackwell et al., 2001). Consumers first begin with an internal search from their long-term memory or from any knowledge and experience they already have(Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001; Potočnik, 2005). If the consumer does not have the information he is looking for, he will search for external information from several different sources, acquaintances, friends and family (Blackwell et al., 2001; Potočnik, 2005). Consumers are looking for information in different ways: some by searching the internet, others through media, advertisements, shopping, etc.

Kotler (2004) believes that there are two levels of seeking information: increased attention and an active search for information. With increased attention, the customer is more receptive to information about the product. With active search for information, a consumer is looking for printed materials, calls a friend and visits the shops. Kotler divides consumer's information sources into four groups, namely: (i) personal sources: family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, (ii) business sources: advertising, sellers, brokers, packaging, in-store presentations, (iii) public sources: mass media, consumer organisations, and (iv) the experiential sources: handling, inspection and use of the product (Kotler, 2004).

Personal sources of information that have a confirmatory and value function have the biggest impact on a consumer. Acquaintances, friends and family members play an important role in purchases where the consumer is highly involved in the purchase and does not have sufficient knowledge and experience for the purchase of the product. Public sources, especially information retrieval over the internet, have a growing influence. With this method, the consumers want to achieve a greater perceptual matching of information and thus reduce the risk of further decisions (Chung-Hoon and Young-Gul, 2003, 3).

In the case of FT, information is essential for consumer's decisions. Information on the operation of FT, fair price and the purpose of FT are extremely important to the consumer according to the different marketing mix, which we already presented and is more turned to the producer and not to the consumer. It is not only important that the information is sufficient, it is also important that it is of high quality and that it reaches all sources of information (Kotler, 2004). Mumel (1999) notes that criteria consumers use to evaluate alternatives are called evaluative criteria. The number, type and importance of the criteria vary from consumer to consumer and from product to product. These are the factors that consumers take into account when deciding on a purchase. Certain characteristics that are important in choosing are easier for consumers to evaluate. These are price, size andbrand. It is harder for consumers to assess the quality, reliability or usefulness for health. Most consumers use price and brand as a substitute for a measure of quality. The essence of the brand “Fair trade” is also its mission (Rihtaršič, 2008). Precisely for this reason the FT certification mark is extremely important. It guarantees consumers the quality and visibility of the product and makes the evaluation and selection of the product much easier. The next stage of the consumer’s purchase behaviour, after careful evaluation of alternatives, is the purchase. The buyer must make two very important decisions. He/she must make the decision on the purchase of a product or service and where the product will be bought because a choice of the product can also influence the choice on the seller (Potočnik, 2005). Mumel (1999) says that the buyer must choose the store and the product, which can be done in three ways: (i) simultaneously, (ii) first choose the product and then the store, (iii) first choose the store and then the product.

The above theoretical frameworks fully apply in the case of FT in Slovenia. Numerous times consumers first decide to make a purchase in Fair trade and only then they choose a product. On the other hand, those consumers who buy Fair trade tea or coffee buy this product in shopping malls, because it is easier due to convenience, the location and easier parking. After successful completion of the purchase of the product the consumer decides on the possibilities and methods of use of the product. He/she can use the product immediately or defer the use to a later time (Blackwell et. al., 2001). It is particularly important that the consumer is satisfied with the use of the product and that the product meets the need of the customer. If the product does not meet those needs, “a negative evaluation of the product” follows (Mumel, 1999). In a fair purchase of the product, we must not neglect the use of the product. FT products must meet the consumer's needs in their quality and usability – as for justice. Even if satisfied, the consumer repeatedly questions the accuracy of his choice. The consumer is uncertain whether he/she decided properly – this is called the after-sales dissonance (Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001). It is therefore extremely important that the consumer gets confirmation and information that his decision about the purchase was correct. The disposal of the product is the last stage in the model of the consumer's purchase decision. A consumer may retain, discard, sell, process or recycle the product (Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001). Nowadays, consumers are becoming increasingly eco-conscious. It is important for them that the product is recyclable, biodegradable and that they do not pollute the environment when they dispose of it. This certainly applies to the FT products and their consumers.

Ethical consumerism

The research on so-called *ethical consumerism* has shown that the "moral consumers" are motivated by desire to be better people and this should be their personal integrity. On the other hand, there is a danger that with this ethics of virtue, the main problem of consumerism would be recognized in hedonism and a desire for selfish pleasure of unethical consumers. Such a definition would disqualify consumers with whom ethical companies want to communicate the most (Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm, 2005). Moral consumerism is reflected in various forms of consumer behaviour and it has become particularly visible in the last 15 years. This has developed into a real movement that includes various forms of purchase behaviour and various activities of "moral consumers", including the boycott of certain companies, buying products that are not tested on animals, avoiding buying products that are manufactured by children or purchase products of FT and organic food, re-usable and recycled products (Crane and Matten, 2007). Ethical consumerism is about freedom of choice. Jelovac believes "*that ever since the emergence of a market economy, freedom was conceived as a precondition of the existence and development of well-being.Freedom is seen as a choice, continuity of operations*"(Jelovac 2010, 88). A moral consumer is free to decide whom to support or boycott with his or her purchase. It is all a matter of voluntary choice. A shopping cart is in a figurative sense a symbol ofthe "right to vote". Brinkmann (2004) considers that there are four types of ethical consumerism: 1) *a positive shopping*, favouring ethical products (FT, organic food products or animal-friendly), 2) *a negative buy*, which means avoiding the products with which we do not agree (eggs from caged hens, or cars with high CO_2 emissions), and 3) *shopping based on corporate policy as a whole* (boycotts of "Nestle" and buying "Body Shop" products), 4) the fourth transparent approach is a *combination of the previous three* and means that the consumer is looking for companies and products together and evaluates which is the most ethical brand. Throughout the review of the literature we can see various models of moral purchase behaviour. In the core of the models there is mostly the logic of "deliberate action" or "planned behaviour". So it is about the knowledge or belief that is leading to the establishment of positions that affect intention and behaviour (De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007). With its clearly defined set of business rules which are based on respect for human rights and the promotion of development work and not "charity", FT satisfies the needs of even the most demanding ethical consumer. In fact, it guarantees with its certificate that the purchase decision is morally correct. This is why we also see great success of FT development not only in Slovenia, but also in the whole Europe and the U.S.

Method

The data werecollected through survey questions. The questions were based on the previously discussed research and related to all the main constructs: knowledge about FT, information quantity, information quality, scepticism, concern, product interest, price acceptability and convenience. We used a five-point Likert scale for rating. In analysing the data of our empirical study, we used factor analysis, analysis of the reliability and validity of scales, descriptive statistics and analysis of variance statistics and structural equation modelling.

Sample

We obtained the sample for our study using the principle of snowball sampling. The sample consisted of 258 respondents of which 253 provided usable data. The criterionforusability was at least 90% of responses. Reliability of the measurement instrument was tested by using Cronbach alpha. As shown in Table 1, the value for reliability is under 0.7only in the category “convenience of purchase”. We explain this with the limited availability of sales outlets.

Table 1: FT dimensions and constructs

Dimension	Construct name	Sign	Cronbach alfa
Knowledge of FT	KNOWLEDGE	+	0.815
FT Information	INFO QUALITY	+	0.705
	INFO QUANTITY	+	0.785
Attitude towards FT in general	CONCERN	+	0.724
	SCEPTICISM	-	0.754
Attitude towards FT products	PRODUCT INTEREST	+	0.856
	CONVENIENCE	+	0.639
	PRODUCT LIKEABILITY	+	0.926
	PRICE ACCEPTABILITY	+	0.698
Buying behaviour	BUYING BEHAVIOUR	+	1.000

The model of FT consumer buying behaviour in Slovenia

The basis for the model was taken from the existing research[20]of Janssens and De Pelsmacker (2005).In the process of designing our own model we took into account different theoretical frameworks for models of buying behaviour.

[20]The authors explain their model (shown in Figure 1) as following: At the core of the model is traditional Knowledge- Attitudes- Behaviour logic. For reasons of clarity, in this Figure, the actual construct has been replaced by a description of their main overarching dimensions: *Information about FT* stands for two constructs: perception of the quantity of FT information and perception of the quality of FT information. *General attitude towards FT* stands for two constructs: concern/interest in FT and scepticism/lack of belief in FT as a principle of doing business. *Attitude towards FT products* stands for four constructs: product interest, product likeability, shopping convenience and price acceptability. Conceptually, knowledge is assumed to load on two information constructs, two general attitude constructs and four product attitude constructs. Each of the two information constructs is assumed to have an impact on all general and product attitudes, as well as on buying behaviour. The two general attitude constructs are modelled to load on all four specific attitude constructs as well as on behaviour directly. Finally, all four product attitudes are assumed to have an impact on buying behaviour (De Pelsmacker and Jansen, 2007).

Figure 1:A conceptual model for FT buying behaviour by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007)

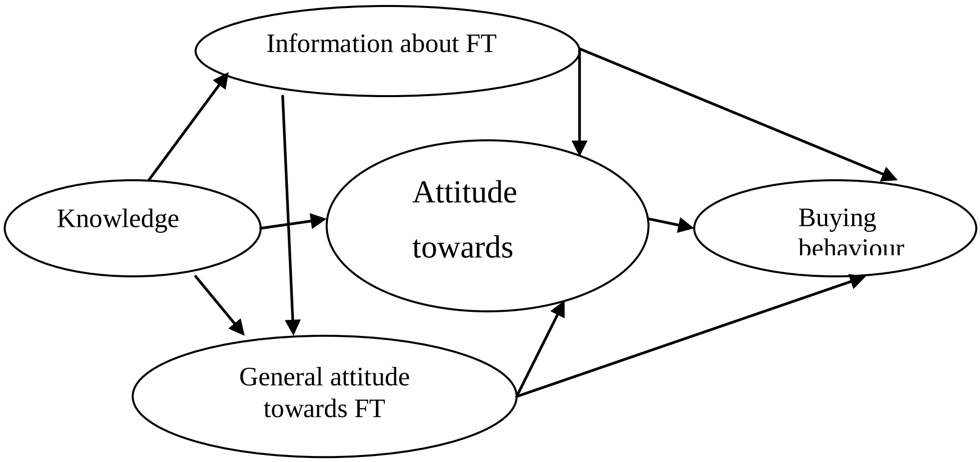


Figure 1 shows a conceptual model of *Fair trade buying behaviour*. In this research, the model consists of 10 variables. Questions were analysed using factor analysis.The suitability of data for factor analysis was checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin indicator, which has a value of 0.821, i.e. greater than 0.5, suggesting that the data satisfy the requirements for factor analysis. With the help of thecorrelation matrix we see that correlations between individual variables are relatively strong.

Specific factors influence the variable convenience to the greatest extent.

Table 2: Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1.000	-.146	-.180	-.091	.106	.148	.036	.330	-.114	.141
2	-.146	1.000	-.047	.028	.012	-.106	.151	-.098	-.045	-.077
3	-.180	-.047	1.000	-.330	-.354	.210	-.330	.176	.463	-.231
4	-.091	.028	-.330	1.000	.274	-.051	.169	-.166	-.164	-.071
5	.106	.012	-.354	.274	1.000	-.038	.363	-.112	-.285	.127
6	.148	-.106	.210	-.051	-.038	1.000	-.106	.198	.081	-.016
7	.036	.151	-.330	.169	.363	-.106	1.000	-.285	-.310	.045

8	.330	-.098	.176	-.166	-.112	.198	-.285	1.000	.091	-.041
9	-.114	-.045	.463	-.164	-.285	.081	-.310	.091	1.000	-.199
10	.141	-.077	-.231	-.071	.127	-.016	.045	-.041	-.199	1.000
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization										

By using the method of maximum likelihood, we reach the factor weights for individual factors. The Pattern Matrix indicates regression coefficients (see Table 3).

Table 3: Pattern Matrix

	FACTOR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
KNOWLEDGE 1	-.036	-.014	.015	-.018	-.765	-.024	-.120	-.003	-.080	.002
KNOWLEDGE 2	-.047	.019	-.082	.031	-.870	.083	-.004	.102	.138	.030
KNOWLEDGE 3	.045	.045	.117	-	-	-	.006	-	-	-

				.123	.592	.060		.025	.035	.023
SCEPTICISM 1	-.083	.074	.012	.016	.063	-.015	.560	.078	-.071	.029
SCEPTICISM 2	.044	-.035	-.055	.051	.007	-.068	.492	-.139	.086	-.058
SCEPTICISM 3	.068	.045	-.001	-.065	.188	.012	.655	-.077	.105	-.019
SCEPTICISM 4	.043	-.008	-.032	.060	-.060	.030	.602	-.013	-.295	.079
SCEPTICISM 5	-.052	.000	-.031	-.003	.003	-.054	.392	-.016	-.400	.042
CONCERN 1	.068	-.006	.282	-.157	-.253	-.033	-.130	-.090	.289	.032
CONCERN2	-.054	.009	.077	-.051	-.056	-.026	.008	.110	.593	-.006
CONCERN 3	.005	.006	.367	-.017	-.117	-.020	-.136	.031	.303	-.121
INFO QUALITY 1	.792	-.047	-.031	-.057	.007	.060	.052	.036	.076	.121
INFO QUALITY 2	1.008	.015	.065	.028	.026	-.031	-.060	.035	-.043	-.153
INFO QUALITY 3	.367	-	-	.017	-	.020	.085	.030	-	.300

		.017	.158		.020				.110	
INFO QUANTITY 1	.066	-.044	-.101	-.022	-.115	.091	.061	.527	.074	-.047
INFO QUANTITY 2	-.048	-.085	.157	.008	-.084	-.097	-.060	.710	.065	-.016
INFO QUANTITY 3	.143	.048	.014	-.042	.142	.016	-.112	.557	-.036	.294
INFO QUANTITY 4	.090	-.018	.112	-.083	.046	.042	-.132	.441	-.037	-.160
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 1	.024	.049	.007	-.048	.022	.539	-.004	.083	-.041	-.084
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 2	-.020	.066	.147	.076	-.089	.485	.038	.040	.125	-.170
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 3	.016	-.081	.101	-.060	-.002	.631	.042	-.085	-.001	.130
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY4	.000	-.049	-.105	.054	.031	.776	-.105	-.020	-.037	.068
CONVENIENCE 1	.028	-.971	.017	.063	.106	.043	.077	.133	.037	-.119
CONVENIENCE 2	-.011	-.513	.000	-.040	-.025	-.015	-.048	-.035	-.033	.047
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY	-.030	.009	-	-	-	-	-	.017	.021	.047

1			.001	.857	.029	.058	.004			
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY 2	.009	-.011	-.081	-.976	-.033	.075	.017	-.023	-.036	-.088
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY 3	.025	-.011	.051	-.868	.019	-.010	.012	.032	.015	.024
PRODUCT INTEREST 1	.104	-.044	.677	.045	-.127	.021	-.041	.057	-.026	-.124
PRODUCT INTEREST 2	-.021	-.023	.926	.000	-.007	.065	.033	.025	.059	.103
PRODUCT INTEREST 3	-.102	.043	.721	-.117	.044	.042	.001	.027	-.016	-.056
BUYING BEHAVIOUR	-.077	-.046	.268	-.045	-.052	.054	-.068	-.038	.181	.100
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.										
Rotation converged in 12 iterations.										

Now we have enough statistical data to create a model following the pattern of De Pelsmacker and Janssen. Our model was designed by using the module AMOS in SPSS. Multiple regression equations were simultaneously examined with the help of structural equation modelling (SEM) statistical techniques (Hair, 2010). The following Table 4 presents the dimensions of the fit of the model.

Table 4: Goodness of fit measures for the buying behaviour model

Fit measures	Sign
X^2	705,903
Degrees of freedom	397
X^2/ d.f.	1.778
TLI	0.878
CFI	0.898
RMSEA	0.051

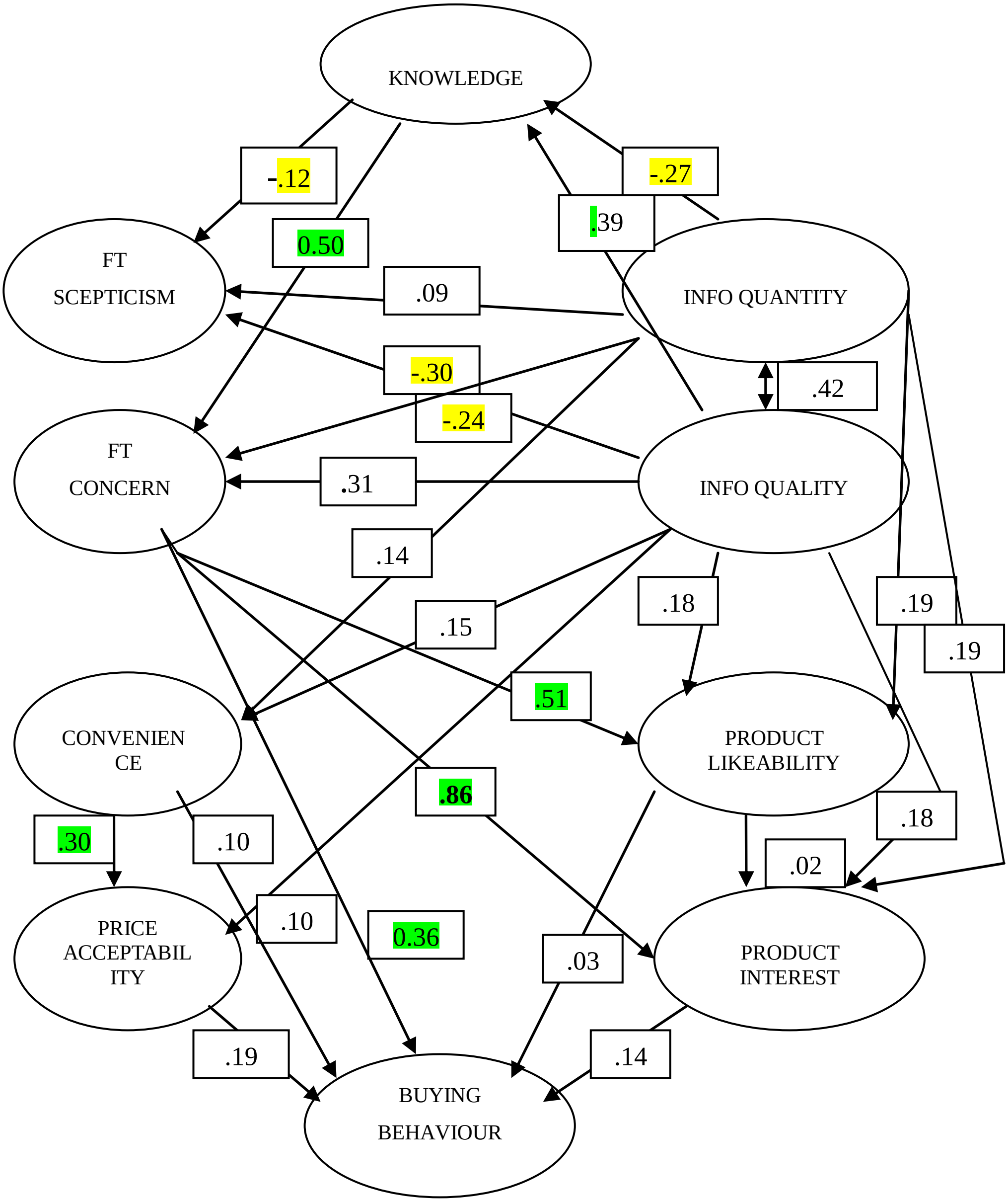
As is apparent from the results, the model fits the data well, since the value of Chi-square/degrees of freedom is fewer than 3. In addition, the RMSEA value is 0.051, which is slightly above the recommended value of 0.05 (Bryne, 2010).Most significant pathways are plotted in Figure 2 below. Due to the matching data, traditional logic is somewhat changed. The independent dimension became "information on FT" with its variables: the quantity and quality of information. A purchase is decided by understanding the concept of FT and concern for the implementation and operation of the concept of FT. Both variables have a direct impact on the interest in FT products and with it on the decision to buy. Quality of information is more important than the quantity when it comes to independent variables. Too much information adversely affects the care and conscience of people. We can say that it comes to commercializing the concept and with it a different positioning on the market. Knowing the concept of FT has a major impact on concern for FT in general. This starts an interest in FT products, which ultimately leads to a single purchase. General view of FT is the most important variable in the model and the concern for the operation of the concept of FT in general is the most important factor. The price of the products is most affected by convenience of a purchase. Good location and a reasonable layout of products within individual stores have a positive effect on the achieved price.

The model clearly shows that the quality of information indirectly affects the knowledge of FT and concern. Knowing FT in quality of information indirectly affects concern. Concern indirectly affects the likeability of products, product interest and buying behaviour. Interestingly, scepticism has no effect, because consumers have not even developed it due to their poor knowledge of FT and the quality of information. Convenience of purchase affects the price, which is not surprising: due to low demand, there is a short supply and consequently the price is low.

Discussion and Conclusion

With the entrance of FT on the Slovenian market, a form of ethical consumerism has developed, which we call *positive shopping*. In the future, it is necessary to devote additional efforts to inform consumers. Information, in addition to other factors in the social environment, will be critical for the development of other forms of ethical consumerism. Survey results certainly give their contribution to the theory of ethical consumerism. Estimated model of purchase behaviour of FT consumers could be an important and useful starting point for further work of organizations engaged in the promotion, acquisition and sale of FT products. This is one of the forms of moral consumerism and social entrepreneurship. In the future, it is necessary to further research other different forms and ways of moral consumerism in Slovenia.

Figure 2: Estimated behavioural model of purchasing FT products


KNOWLEDGE
-.12
0.50
-.27
.39
FT
SCEPTICISM
.09
INFO QUANTITY
-.30
.42
-.24
FT
CONCERN
.31
INFO QUALITY
.14
.15
.18
.19
.19
.51
CONVENIEN
CE
PRODUCT
LIKEABILITY
.86
.30
.10
.18
.02
PRICE
ACCEPTABIL
ITY
.10
0.36
.03
PRODUCT
INTEREST
.19
.14
BUYING
BEHAVIOUR

In the future, it is necessary to focus additional efforts on informing consumers and at the same time focus on their education in the light of promotion and development of the concept of *Social Corporate Responsibility* (Jelovac, 2012). Such information, in addition to other factors in the social environment, is the key to developing other forms of moral consumerism and behaviour of different stakeholders. State institutions must connect with non-governmental organisations and systematically inform consumers about FT. In other countries, where we can observe a highly successful development of FT purchasing habits, consumers were informed of the importance of purchasing a FT product. Governments informed them with the help of non-governmental programs and campaigns.We believe that the model of consumer FT purchase behaviour in Slovenia which was presented in this article is a solid starting point for the development of FT and other forms of ethical consumerism in Slovenia.

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