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Embracing ASEAN Community, Harmonizing Diversity

Building Regional Culture : Asean Mayor Forum Roles To Improve Regional
Partnership

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ABSTRACT

As one of ASEAN pillars, culture not only as a way to improve the quality of life, regional culture also becomes an identity which is shows tolerance in diversity, sustained inter-state relations, community development and certainly shows the future of ASEAN. This is certainly could not be separated from the participation of all stakeholders including local governments to promote awareness, participation and ownership among the people the region. One of forum that involved local government is ASEAN Mayor Forum (AMF) that seen partnership as a method to increase the quality of community and environmental sustainability in the region. This paper aims to explore how local governments with diverse cultures are able to build strong regional cultural ties that can encourage regional collaboration between cities and local governments through knowledge sharing and mutual learning among key stakeholders in the region. Using the concept of paradiplomacy and cross-disciplinary studies with qualitative data, this study is an attempt to explaining new tactics for converting global values into local norms and regulation.

Keywords : cultures, local government, partnership, paradiplomacy

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INTRODUCTION

ASEAN Community formed by three pillars which became synergy or integration among member of ASEAN which are ASEAN Political Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, dan ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community which are expected to open up the opportunities of harmony among member of ASEAN and realize cooperation among states in ASEAN. As part of three pillars, Socio-Cultural is a pillar that actually involves a lot of people to people contact. This reflected in ASCC blueprint that declared The ASCC will address the region's aspiration to lift the quality of life of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented and environmentally friendly geared towards the promotion of sustainable development. The ASCC shall contribute to building a strong foundation for greater understanding, good neighbourliness, and a shared sense of responsibility ("ASEAN Socio Cultural Community Blueprint" 2009). This goal is in line with the idea of the establishment of an open and dynamic of ASEAN Community which consist of various characteristic of geography, economic, politic, social and cultural. In process to realize ASEAN integrity, the barriers became complex thus ASEAN needs to increase cooperation and regional competitiveness with improve the quality of human resources and environment. ASEAN open access widest to all citizens in all states of ASEAN member in any field, e.g. education, cultural, science and technology, health and environment. ("Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia - Masyarakat Sosial Budaya ASEAN" 2017).

As a regional organization, ASEAN became a benchmark for implementing relations among states in region. Regionalism itself is not a new thing to states in South East Asia. In implementation, the regionalism concept become complex identity. In a simple term, Acharya see that identity refers to an actor's (which may be a person, group of persons, state, or group of states) sense of being unique or distinctive because of physical and social attributes, values, and patterns of behaviour. ("Building ASEAN Community: Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Reflections - ASEAN_at_50_Vol_4_Full_Report.Pdf" 2017). That showed similar identity often become a strong binding to see the relations among states. In implementation, Functional cooperation in ASEAN focuses on the problems of putting people at the centre in regional community building more in demand because in implementation, the actor of the state often feel that they have a bond that formed because of similar identity.

The existence of identity that formed among ASEAN states becomes a binding element that is a reflection of the nation and born with a set of norms that define the standards of the society. This similar identity became a reason why AMF formed. The First AMF was initiated by the Association of the Indonesian City Municipalities (APEKSI), and convened in cooperation with Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Indonesia, East Java Provincial Government, Surabaya City Government, and Asian Development Bank. This Forum was aimed to contribute in the promotion of people-to-people contact and ASEAN awareness towards the establishment of ASEAN Community 2015 as well as to strengthen the network of civil society in the region. This aim then sharpened with the agreement that establishment of the AMF as an effort to promote and enhance regional cooperation among ASEAN cities and with cities from ASEAN dialogue partners. The Forum also discussed some priority areas of cooperation to be incorporated, such as Public Administration and Governance, Environment and Sustainable Development, Public Service, Regional Network, Human Resource Development, Public Private Partnership, Gender Mainstreaming, and Education. The First AMF also agreed to take necessary measures towards the formalization the Forum through consultation and coordination with related institutions including the ASEAN Secretariat. (“Ministry of Foreign Affairs - 1st ASEAN City Mayors Forum, Surabaya, Indonesia, 24-25 October 2011” 2017)

The 2nd AMF was held in Makassar, Indonesia in 2015, discussed key policy frameworks and instruments, facilitated knowledge sharing and mutual learning among mayors and a number of international organization working in the field to foster sustainable development to achieve stronger community in ASEAN region. To other recommendation such as political issue in strengthening local government in developing countries, strengthening smart city concept then formation of ASEAN University. It is expected that local governments can learn from their peers thereby mutual partnership can be developed in the region. (“2nd ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF) | United Cities and Local Governments” 2017). On the 2nd forum seen that local government attempted to improve their roles in sustainable process of inter-state relations.

Then The 3rd ASEAN Mayors Forum was held in in Taguig city, Philippines in 2017. It aimed to promote cross-border interactions between local governments, as well as to establish partnerships for the improvement of the quality of life and environmental sustainability within the region in accordance with the blueprint of ASEAN. (“ASEAN Mayors Forum 2017 / News / Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast-Asia - Home - Delgosea Website Interface” 2017) Multiple sets of themes,

issues, and agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), New Urban Agenda, Local Economic Development, Resiliency, Youth and Women Leadership, with emphasis on the people. The ASEAN recognizes the role of city governments in ensuring no one from their community is left behind in their development process.

As previously emphasized, local government is one of the essential actors to ensure the realization of the vision. Given ASEAN Community's position as a regional initiative, it is easy to resort to the general belief that cooperation at the state level between Member States is the utmost imperative. While there is no denying that, Member States also need significant assistance from authorities at the subnational levels to approve and ultimately implement the numerous and complex programs and policies prompted by ASEAN leaders toward establishing ASEAN Community. That is why local governments are to play essential roles in the ASEAN Community (admin 2017).

The purpose of this study is to explore how AMF as a forum that involved local government with various cultures could build a strong tie of regional culture so as to encourage regional collaboration among cities and local government through various of knowledge and learn each other among main stake holder in the region.

REGIONAL IDENTITY DAN PARADIPLOMACY

The existence of cooperation is inseparable from significance of globalization and regionalization which is make the relations among state more varied. The similarity of regional identity makes the actor of international relations not just limited to the state, but also to the non-state actor as a representative of the similarity. Region is defined as the territorial and administrative unit on the first level of authority after the central government in both federal and unitary state system(Kuznetsov 2014). Regionalism perspective actually a concept from regions and regional identity-building in relation to local and national identity formation processes, and what it takes to integrate individuals of diverse cultural and ethnic groups into a regional identity .This despite the fact that Southeast Asia is a mosaic of different cultural and ethnic groups, and that it is often pointed out that globalisation processes increase the risk of ethnic fragmentation(Jönsson 2010).

There are three types of identity building according by Raagma. First, legitimising identity generating a civil society, that is, a set of organisations and institutions as well as series of structured and organised social actors, which reproduce the identity. The second type is identity for resistance– emergence of all kinds of protest movement. The

third type is construction of a new identity, invention of new social structures. it can be considered extremely important for planners: a successfully shared vision helps to safeguard the functionality and sustainability of newly created structures(Raagmaa 2010). The formed of identity building in ASEAN almost covering all three of these types but the new form of the identity more directed to diplomacy development that has more direct access to the community.

This region concept is related with paradiplomacy concept as a basic relationship that involved local government. Unlike the foreign policy of states, regional diplomacy does not seek to represent broad general interests or to be comprehensive in coverage. Regions do not have sovereign governments able to lay down their definition of the 'national interest' and to pursue it in a unified and coherent manner. Regions are complex entities containing a multiplicity of groups which may share common interests in some areas but be sharply divided on other issues. Even where there are strong devolved governments, they cannot simply lay down a line to be followed by all but must seek to bring together independent actors around specific programmes and issues. They must fit their own activities into a world dominated by national governments and transnational organizations, which they can rarely challenge head on but must work around or with. This sort of activity, operating below or in the interstices of the traditional system of international relations, has often been called 'paradiplomacy', indicating its partial scope and its difference in aims, targets and modus operandi from the traditional diplomatic games. There are three broad sets of reasons for regions to engage in this kind of paradiplomatic activity: political; cultural and economic(“Paradiplomacy and Regional Networking - 924-FRCU0105-Eu-Keating.Pdf” 2017).

Paradiplomacy is a concept as a set of instruments for achieving certain symbolic and policy-oriented objectives.in broad definition,paradiplomacy is a political entity's extra-jurisdictional activity targeting foreign political entities.(Grydehøj, n.d.) The intention is to influence subnational entities in other countries. This indicates that the basic thought about sovereignty has changed. The Westphalia system that put the sovereignty to the central government have to share it power to the local government in international activities.

There has been a tendency to view paradiplomacy progressively, as taking place in waves of increasingly sophisticated political activity.Criekmans indeed, breaks down “the full spectrum of diplomatic instruments” into the following:

a) *Ius legationis* or political representation abroad;

- b) Ius tractandi or treaty-making power;
- c) Other agreements of a certain formalized nature: (political) declarations of intent and/or cooperation agreements, transnational contracts and cultural agreements or partnerships;
- d) The development of own programmes of assistance and sharing of know-how: bilateral programmes, programmes on cross-boundary cooperation, programmes that want to bring the civil societies of the region and other regions/countries together, or multilateral programmes;
- e) Other forms of participation in multilateral frameworks and organizations: observing and participating in (technical) committees, the creation of OR participation in funds within multilateral organizations, becoming an associate member of multilateral organizations;
- f) Participation in other formal or informal networks;
- g) Developing a public diplomacy, both domestic and international. (Criekmans 2010)

The efficiency of public and civic sectors, their ability to carry out strategies, the involvement of local people and enterprises in development planning and promotion regions has become increasingly essential. Cultural issues are important in regions with their own languages. Cultural exchanges may be a way of bringing together people from the same culture in different states, or of promoting inter_cultural exchange.

WHY AMF SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE?

In last decade, cooperation which involved states in region became interesting. The formed of ASEAN in 1967 came from the idea to create an organisation for economic, social and cultural cooperation (johan 2017) . The quest for official regional cooperation in Southeast Asia has not been consistently pursued over the years. The various collaboration patterns have made the process complicated – partly because of membership constellations and partly because they have been caught between security and economic considerations. This development could explain ASEAN's move at its seventh summit meeting, in Bali, Indonesia, in 2003, where initiatives were taken to revitalise Southeast Asian regionalism by the establishment of an ASEAN Economic Community, an ASEAN Security Community, and an ASEAN Social and Cultural Community.

As a new forum, AMF tried to show that local government has a capability to join to encourage civil society. Till now local government play a vital role in every Nation, it stand to ensure the participation of a common man or individual in a nation because it is a government closer to the people which enable easy participation of the rural habitat and community in government decision and policy formulation. Local government as a tier of government at the grass root level serves as a two way channel between the apex of government and the local communities i.e. It serves a channel of communication between law maker(legislature) the policy implementer (executive) of the state and federal government toward achieving National development. Local government ensure adequate formulation of policy and programme that will satisfy the felt needs of the rural habitat. Through which without the existence of local government even development can not be achieved in nation.(“Justification of Local Government Existence toward Development” 2017) The existence of local governments will give an awareness to ASEAN Community to improve infrastructure development and human resources to face ASEAN Economic Community.

The existence of local government has always been defended on the basis that local government is a crucial aspect of the process of democratization. Furthermore argued that no political system is considered to be complete and democratic if it does not have a system of local government. Thus, the encouraging of local government became a main choice with developing the smart city concept. This relationship type was initially conceived of as primarily a cultural exchange and opportunity to foster goodwill and understanding, though in recent years the term has started to blend with paradiplomacy as city-city relationships intensify.

See the dynamics that is happens in ASEAN, the socio-cultural perspective become a new alternative which is more interesting to be examined. Despite being one of ASEANs’ pillars, this perspective is rarely linked to political and economic condition in the region. Even though deepening political-security and economic relations can only be meaningful when there is a caring society in Southeast Asia. The process of developing cultural integration is not easy. Even the culture is cognate, but it is consist of variety kind. But with the right pattern, we can make culture become the most effective binding in an inter-state relationship. It caused by the norm which is shaped from the culture can form politic pattern and economic pattern which is developed by state. AMF see that cultural binding can transform ASEAN into a people-centric organization from a civil society perspective. With this approach, ASEAN Community can be truly feel the

region by making it part of their daily lives and creating a truly people-centred Asean identity.

The regional culture comprises the way things are done there: the shared values, beliefs, and the social tradition of the region. Culture is now seen as an active force in social reproduction, the negotiated process and product of the discourses through which people signify their experiences to themselves and others. Regional identity formation may obtain different levels from primary socialisation (satisfying the basic need to belong) to social action (free will to be mobilised for community action) and articulated regional identity. In the case of the last level, the idea of a common region becomes the important target of self-fulfilment for the personality willing to take responsibility and leadership in some community actions. The regional consciousness and collective feeling of people works additionally as an accelerator of institutional and collective learning and personal development. In addition, local communities, which generate their own economic prosperity, have been noted for a distinct local and technical competence. A region with good internally-supported identity and reputation has good potential to attract investments and new people. A neighbourhood where people have no particular regional identity may grow fast thanks to the investment made by outsiders interested in the utilisation of natural resources, location or labour force, but may later rapidly decline because of rootless people and missing community. (Raagmaa 2010)

The challenges are also not easy to face. AMF will face challenges in the mobility of people across the region. The political condition and economy deceleration also become a problem. However, we need to see that ASEAN more emphasis its development to economy and politic pillar. In the 1980s, the ASEAN initiated a number of regional integration projects, such as, preferential tariffs for certain ASEAN products and complementation projects in support of ASEAN industries. In the 1990s, ASEAN became even more ambitious with the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) project implemented through a Common Effective Preferential Tariff regime (CEPT) (Ofreneo, Portus, and Serrano, 2009) but the implementation of this activity also does not make the condition of ASEAN Community better. Because at the same time, the globalization and liberalization also make some elements became marginalized, such as, the small farmers; communal fisherfolk; small and micro enterprises with no global linkages; domestic industries producing for the home market; indigenous peoples who do not comprehend the meaning of tradeables and exportables. Besides, the norm of ASEAN way that limited the member state to join in

conflict or internal issue also become a biggest barrier in developing the region. This is where AMF expected to be a forum which is involved people in building an ASEAN community of caring and sharing societies. With focus in on regional culture bind, AMF expected able to involve the society actively and sustainable so there will be no gap among society in the region. The process of disseminating information can be intensive, so that the community can realized well.

AMF: WHAT DOES PEOPLE-CENTEREDNESS MEAN?

In line with AMF formation which is promote people-centeredness, every activity in ASCC should be done through the participation among peoples, irrespective of social status, positions or capacities they hold, along with the collaboration of state and non-state actors. This is what it should be, for real integration can only happen if there is integration at the grassroots level, if people in the ten ASEAN countries begin to understand that they are ASEAN citizens and that they have a right to be heard. Hal ini juga disebutkan dalam ASCC Blueprint yaitu is to contribute to realizing an ASEAN Community that is people centered and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced (“ASEAN Socio Cultural Community Blueprint” 2009)

In the 3rd of AMF which is discussed about the impact and ramifications of Asean integration on local urban communities in the Asia Pacific region. Included in the agenda were topics that aim to bring Asean Connectivity Roadmap, Asean Vision 2025, and other global landmark commitments at a local level (Inquirer 2017). This aim showed that AMF is serious in implementing blue print of ASCC in a cooperation based on people centeredness. AMF give a chance to local government to explore how good practices can be replicated in other cities, and to identify the resources required for implementation. With the access among local government will expand the cooperation and push local adaptation and implementation of common principles, based on international standards by constructing partnership identity.

In line with concept of paradiplomacy that declared by Crieckman, identity construction can be applied in many ways for example through the formation of regulation that more contribute to people centeredness. This regulation can implemented with improve the intensive communication among national and sub-national actors. The aim is to promote

common values emphasizing unity in diversity among all social levels. Because ASEAN identity is defined as the collective personality, norms, values, beliefs and aspirations in one ASEAN community.

Regional culture which is expected to be formed through AMF can refer to the cosmopolitan community that changes continuously and affects the political challenges, social and cultural that need specific responses. Nascimento said that it is important to sort out a series of questions often attached to the idea of community: the tense relationship between individual autonomy and belonging to collectivity; the plurality within and beyond particular communities; the conflict that may arise among different communities (A. Nascimento 2013). These are based on the reality that in a cosmopolitan community people share the same space and engage with each other.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PILLAR THAT AMF FOCUSES SHAPES THE FIRST TWO PILLARS?

As the forum which aims to improve local government roles in developing regional partnerships, the culture binding that is carried by AMF shows an interesting phenomenon. Culture may be a source of conflict among ASEAN members. But as ASEAN countries face a global crisis of economic downturn and climate change disasters, we can believe that there is a greater need for arts and culture to connect the masses, cultural symbols should be dynamically applied as a learning tool for capacity building and confidence building to protect ASEAN bio-cultural diversity, strengthen the spirit and nourish the memory of kinship among ASEAN peoples to triumph over adversity.

In each meeting AMF always shows local culture in the place where AMF is held, thus AMF not only becomes a forum to encourage the economy in the states of South East Asia but also as a place to introduce culture among members of ASEAN. Strengthening culture bonds among members of ASEAN is an urgent thing to be aware of by the leaders in all ASEAN member states. As a continuation from developing human resources, AMF can be a way to prepare the society in the region not only as productive workers but also as prime movers of society – informed citizens and culturally aware. The development of people is not just to fulfil the manpower requirements of a growing economy but also to honor responsible and informed citizens of the community, the country and the region (“ERIA-DP-2015-65.Pdf” 2017).

With the existence of globalization, the regional bonds not only centred to economy integration. We also could not hang on security cooperation. There are so many agenda that need to develop and those can be implemented in cultural diversity frame. AMF could be a forum which is initiates those three pillars through socio cultural pillar. The strengthening of this aspect could develop through AMF meeting, because this meeting carrying the strengthening of local government that connected directly to the society, so the policy will be more efficient. In a region where 10 diverse cultures come together to form a community, it is important that the people understand the beginnings and journey of ASEAN.

ASEAN therefore needs to work on social integration if it hopes to strengthen the organisation. ASSC one of the three pillars of the Community, should be a key driving force for doing so. ASSC stipulates that its key elements are human development, welfare, rights and justice, environmental sustainability, narrowing the development gap, and building an ASEAN identity. Vejjajiva menyatakan bahwaThe AEC Blueprint 2025 continues these themes with a vision encompassing participation and governance, inclusiveness, sustainability, resilience, and identity building. All these elements are clearly important goals for the Community to enhance its credibility and enable it to play a more global role (“The Critical Importance of Socio-Cultural Community for the Future of ASEAN - ASEAN_at_50_4B.10_Vejjajiva_final.Pdf” 2017)

The implementation of paradiplomacy concept through AMF basically is a chance to the society to join in and controlling the developing process. Paradiplomacy concept give a bigger space to increasing the welfare and society roles to realize development in the region. The democracy leadership and people to people contact could help to handle the problem which is appear and will be right on target.

Socio cultural approach that AMF used also faces the barriers in implementing. The existence of economy and financial gap dominated the pattern that used in ASEAN. The pattern which is always focuses on economy growth made the forum in ASEAN is tend not to paying attention to the society welfare. Even though the problems like the population growth that not in comparable with social welfare also give an effect to sustainable development in ASEAN. Furthermore AMF could be a forum which is influence human development, social welfare and social justice in ASEAN. To enhance the well-being and livelihood of the people of ASEAN through large-scale investment in education, human resource development and capacity building, entrepreneurship, English language development, ICT and applied science and technology, and

improvement of various educational standards. Includes programs and plans for monitoring the poverty, implementing systems and processes for poverty alleviation, and emphasizing the cooperating against pandemics and developing regional expertise. To mainstream human rights into policies and all spheres of life in, which include the rights of women and children as well as other disadvantaged and marginalized groups including migrant workers

Conclusion

The formation of AMF has created more chances to the society in ASEAN to be more encourage the bond with understand the diversity and give a priority to the common interest. As a forum that involved Mayor from the cities in the region, AMF have a potential to give a big impact to the development process in ASEAN as regional organization. When similar culture is used it will make easier to reach the final destination in strengthening the bond in the region.

Diversification of ASEAN culture has brought this organization became wealth, more varied and own the unique element as a different from the other regional organization. AMF could be a forum which shown the collaboration among local government through connectivity and empowerment. Local governments play much essential role in realizing the ASEAN vision by bringing the policy on the ground. Local governments are closer to the community and are in a better position to respond to the emerging challenges faced at the local level. Also, they are expected to provide services to their constituents, build local infrastructure, create jobs, and create a good investment climate in their jurisdiction. Local governments can connect communities and integrate them in national economy and help reduce inequality brought about by regional integration.

Local government also face the unpredictable barriers. As a paradiplomacy actor, local government will face the globalization that will examine the strength of cultural bond that has been developed. The improving of cooperation mostly influence by how local governments which are involve in AMF could create a vision or “story” about its future, it can help shape that future. Without a vision, a public agency will be reactive and forced to change, one crisis after another.

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