

### Building the ASEAN Center for Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Response: is ASEAN learning from the experience of the European Civil Protection Mechanism?

Pennisi di Floristella, Angela

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WORKING PAPER



# Building the ASEAN Center for Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Response

Is ASEAN Learning from the Experience of the European Civil Protection Mechanism?

Angela Pennisi di Floristella

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Kolleg-Forschergruppe  
"The Transformative Power of Europe:  
The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas"  
Ihnestr. 26  
14195 Berlin  
Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)30- 838 57033  
Fax: +49 (0)30- 838 57096  
[transform-europe@fu-berlin.de](mailto:transform-europe@fu-berlin.de)  
[www.transformeurope.eu](http://www.transformeurope.eu)

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# BUILDING THE ASEAN CENTER FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

## IS ASEAN LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION MECHANISM?

**Angela Pennisi di Floristella**

### Abstract

Why, following the EU's first attempts at advancing community cooperation in civil protection and the creation of the EU civil protection mechanism, has ASEAN undertaken new initiatives, such as the adoption of a legally binding accord, AADMER and a formal institution, the AHA Center, largely comparable to the institutional innovations endorsed by the EU, in the same issue area? Can these developments be interpreted simply as the result of independent decision-making by ASEAN or are they at least a partial outcome of a transfer process? The aim of this study is to contribute to the emerging debate on European influence in Southeast Asia, taking into account how processes of policy and institutional transfer may lead ASEAN's region builders to learn from the EU's experience. Specifically, by discussing the case of disaster management, which has remained largely unexplored by comparative IR literature, this study argues that independent problem solving does not offer an adequate explanation of ASEAN's developments. Conversely, lesson drawing and emulation are suggested as the two most relevant underlying mechanisms which can explain the gradual and selective adoption of an EU-like model of disaster cooperation.

### The Author



**Angela Pennisi di Floristella** was a Post-doctoral fellow at the Research College "The Transformative Power of Europe", Freie Universität Berlin between October 2013 and September 2014. She received her PhD from the Scuola Superiore of the University of Catania, Italy. She was a visiting scholar at School of International Service of American University in Washington DC, at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore and at the University of Jinan (China). Her research focuses on security dynamics and international relations of Southeast Asia, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and on comparative studies of the EU and ASEAN in the realm of non-traditional security. Recent research focuses on regional approaches to disaster management. Contact: angela.pennisif@gmail.com

## Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Comparing the EU and ASEAN: The Conventional View	7
3. Dealing with Natural Disasters: Tracing the Similarity between EU and ASEAN Disaster Management Systems	8
<i>3.1 Comparing the CPM and the AHA Center: Goals and Practices</i>	10
4. Conceptual Framework: Transfer under Domestic Conditions: Lesson-Drawing and Emulations	14
5. Empirics: The Gradual Transfer of the EU Model of Cooperation in the Sphere of Natural Disasters	17
<i>5.1 The First Phase (2003-2005): The Indian Ocean Tsunami and AADMER From ASEAN's Failure to an Initial Information Cascade</i>	18
<i>5.2 The Second Phase (2008 - onwards): Cyclone Nargis and the Establishment of the AHA Center. From Model Availability to a Process of Transfer in the Making</i>	21
6. Conclusion	25
References	27

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In July 2005, the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER or the Agreement), an innovative legally binding accord, which came into effect in 2009 after the completion of the ratification process. It committed all member states to reduce disaster losses in the region and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies. With the Agreement, ASEAN members have also endorsed the idea of creating their own regional disaster management center, known as the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA). Since then, the institutionalization process of disaster cooperation has been noteworthy. It has included the official launch of the AHA Center in November 2011, and the gradual adoption of several new cooperative mechanisms to improve the level of intra-regional cooperation in this sphere.

In the Southeast Asian context, the emergence and rise of cooperation in the area of disaster management<sup>2</sup>, that is activities aimed at protecting the population from the consequences of disaster, is anything but self-explanatory. In fact, because this domain has been traditionally consigned to the exclusive competence of nation states, the creation of formal structures and procedures to cope with disasters comes as a surprise. Due to historical and political circumstances, ASEAN members have pursued an individualistic approach, refusing joint undertakings and maintaining the Westphalian state as the centerpiece around which standards of behavior for regional cooperation have been designed. But more importantly, these developments, are on a par with EU-like civil protection structures and instruments, which culminated in 2001, with the creation of the European Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM), aimed at facilitating cooperation between EU member states in response to a number of natural and man-made disasters.

Inevitably, ASEAN's new initiatives, largely comparable to the institutional innovations advanced by the EU in the same issue area, raise some important questions which will be explored in this study. Why, following the EU's first attempts at advancing community cooperation in civil protection and the creation of the CPM, has ASEAN created a formal institution, the AHA Center, which mirrors the CPM to a certain extent? Why has ASEAN adopted new formalized and intrusive mechanisms and practices of cooperation similar to those of the EU, thus challenging its traditional informal cooperative approach? How can we account for these developments? Can they be interpreted as the result of an independent decision made by ASEAN, or are they an outcome, at least partially, of a process of transfer?

These questions are even more puzzling given the fact that ASEAN has traditionally presented itself as an alternative model to the West (Yeo 2008) in terms of institutional design, centered on a low level of institutionalization, bureaucratization and flexibility (Acharya 1999; 2012), as well as in terms of constitutive

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2 In the European context these activities are defined by the term civil protection.

values (Farrell 2009), which are centered on the so-called *ASEAN way* emphasizing a commitment to solidarity, informality, non-interference and respect for national sovereignty (Caballero Anthony 1998; Acharya 2009a; Amer 2008; Narine 2008). These aspects of ASEAN's design have led to the general understanding that anything comparable to the EU in the Asia Pacific was unthinkable (Jetschke/Murray 2012: 175).

To answer these questions, political scientists have tended to espouse variants of liberal IR theory that analyze the adoption of comparable institutional solutions and mechanisms by different regional organizations and find them to result from *independent* but similar reactions to parallel problem pressures. A different theoretical starting point takes into account processes of horizontal-interdependent decision-making and considers how the evolution of ASEAN formal institutions and modalities of cooperation can be attributed to the influence of the EU. This approach holds some important lessons for the wider world, including Southeast Asia, in that similar institutional processes can be explained as the result of *interdependent* rather than independent choices.

Although the ASEAN experience represents a hard case for policy and institutional transfer from the EU, because the principles of the *ASEAN way* render ASEAN regionalism distinctive and *sui generis* (Murray/Moxon-Browne 2013), some scholars have already begun to show how European institutions and policies, for example, in areas of economic and political integration and also human rights (Yeo 2008; Jetschke 2009, 2010; Jetschke/Murray 2012; Lenz 2012), might even travel to a very distinctive regional organization, such as ASEAN. Placing itself in the same vein, this study also attempts to contribute to the emerging debate on European influence in Southeast Asia, taking into account how processes of transfer may lead ASEAN's region builders to learn from the EU's experience and to emulate its specific features (Breslin/Higgott 2000). More specifically, by discussing the case study of disaster management cooperation, so far left largely unexplored by comparative IR literature, I argue that independent problem solving does not offer an adequate explanation of the processes that are taking place in Southeast Asia. Instead I argue that it is the EU, which exercises some influence on the design of ASEAN structures and modalities of cooperation in this field. Even though the EU does not actively use mechanisms of socialization, assistance or conditionally to induce transfer processes of disaster management to the ASEAN context, it functions as a reference point for ASEAN. I contend in fact, that it is as a result of domestic causes, above all the pressure of the growing threat of disasters, combined with ASEAN's lack of institutional infrastructure to cope with disaster risk, that the ASEAN Committee of Disaster Management (ACDM)<sup>3</sup> through the active role of the ASEAN Secretariat has started to look at the EU model of disaster cooperation. In particular, it is argued that, since the establishment of the AHA Center in 2011 as the operational engine of AADMER, ASEAN has initiated a process whereby the CPM has begun to draw from the EU CPM to design its own regional modalities of cooperation. Yet, given the significant disparities between the two regions, it is far-fetched to believe that the EU civil protection experience has been entirely transferred to ASEAN and it is unlikely that it ever will be. As it shall be uncovered in the course of this study, ASEAN is selectively borrowing from the EU, yet it is unwilling to alter its core values and principles.

Based on these premises, this paper proceeds as follows: first, it briefly reviews the conventional view on ASEAN and EU institutional design and modalities of cooperation. Subsequently, it compares and traces

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<sup>3</sup> The ACDM is the body responsible for coordinating regional activities in disaster management.

similarities between the ASEAN and the EU disaster management systems by making use of the analytical framework proposed by Bremberg and Britz (2009) to uncover the institutional design of different civil protection systems. The literature on policy transfer is then presented as the conceptual framework guiding this study. In particular, lesson-drawing and emulation are suggested as the two most relevant underlying mechanisms explaining the gradual and selective adoption of an EU-like model of disaster cooperation. The argument is consequently tested in the empirical part of the work, which is based on fieldwork conducted in Jakarta and Europe in 2014, consisting of approximately 20 elite interviews, as well as on the analysis of primary and secondary sources.

In summation, the study aims to offer a twofold contribution. On the one hand, it adds empirical evidence to the literature on transfer from the EU to ASEAN, which is an unlikely case for the adoption of EU-style structures and modus operandi. On the other hand, this paper suggests that the EU plays an important role as a concrete reference point, even in distant regions, where the EU has fewer incentives to promote its regional model of cooperation (Börzel/Risse 2012: 8). Therefore, the paper does not agree with those studies, which argue that the EU has little or no influence particularly in the security sphere, given the dominance of the United States and China (Cameron 2010; Yeo 2010). More specifically, non-traditional security issues, such as disaster management, are considered the new important domains in the EU's relations with ASEAN.

## **2. Comparing the EU and ASEAN: The Conventional View**

Mainstream literature has depicted ASEAN as an anti-EU model (Yeo 2008; Heng 2009). The EU differs from ASEAN in significant ways with respect to economic, political and social factors, which point to "regionally specific, systematically different patterns of politics and policies" (Katzenstein 2007: 396). Studies on ASEAN suggest that the long campaign of *Konfrontasi*, which refers to the conflict against the newly-established federation of Malaysia and the Philippines led by Sukarno, and disputes over Sabah, became pivotal events behind initial efforts to advance forms of regional cooperation and to mitigate inter-state tensions. They eventually culminated in the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 (Tavares 2010; Emmers 2003).

Given these historical experiences and the cultural context, the five ASEAN founding members, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore, set up their regional organization distinctively from the EU. The fear that the withdrawal of colonial powers would leave a vacuum and attract outsiders looking for political gains, the potential spread of communist insurgencies and the domestic troubles of ASEAN states facing the new experience of becoming independent, along with the influence of external powers, inter-state and intra-state disputes, and finally regional suspicion and mistrust, led to the creation of an institution founded on a strict defense of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference. These principles have contributed to the unlikelihood of ASEAN ever becoming a deeply institutionalized supranational organization like the EU (Acharya 2009; Emmers 2003; Emmerson 2008; Narine 2002). Furthermore, disparities in the political and governmental systems of ASEAN-members, composed of both democratic and authoritarian states, with varying levels of economic development as well as diverse religious and cultural traditions, induced ASEAN members to opt for a *light institutional framework* of regional cooperation centered on the avoidance of excessive institutionalization and of bureaucratic

structures with decision-making authorities (Acharya 2009a; Emmers 2003; Emmerson 2008; Narine 2002). Thus, unlike the more intrusive and legalistic modus operandi of Europe, the most vibrant mechanisms through which ASEAN has managed to build confidence, familiarity and understanding to manage tensions and pursue its commitment to “accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in order to strengthen the foundation of a prosperous regional community” (Bangkok Declaration 1967) have been formal and informal meetings conducted at an elite level between ASEAN leaders, ministers and senior officials (Kiwimaki 2002). The practice of consultation (*musyawarah*) and the pursuit of consensus building (*mukafat*) have formed the heart of the ASEAN approach (Acharya 1999). The principles of the so-called *ASEAN way*, laid down in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (1976), which guide regional co-operation, have remained anchored in tacit and passive modalities of inter-state cooperation, centered on the commitment to solidarity, informality, minimal institutionalization, non-interference and respect for national sovereignty (Acharya 2009a; Amer 2008; Narine 2008).

In summation, compared to the EU, which operates with a formal set of institutions with codified methods of decision-making, legal agreements and more intrusive modus operandi, the *ASEAN way* was clearly outside the parameters of formal structures and institutions, and sharply contrasted with Western legalistic criteria (Caballero Anthony 1998; Haacke 2003; Leifer 1989; Severino 2006). No wonder then, that some studies contend that considering the EU experience a paradigm of regionalism implies a perception of the EU as an integration snob (Murray 2010), and that imposing the EU model as a kind of Gold Standard (Sbragia 2008) may appear to be hegemonic (Acharya 2009b) or inappropriate (Murray/Moxon-Browne 2013). Given the sheer diversity of ASEAN and the EU in terms of economic, political, historical and cultural factors, no single institution, formula or approach can apply all by itself (Acharya 2012).

### **3. Dealing with Natural Disasters: Tracing the Similarity between EU and ASEAN Disaster Management Systems**

Despite a major claim in the literature of comparative regionalism that regional organization in Europe and Southeast Asia has taken different forms, reflecting different regional contexts and cultural values, it would be misleading to consider regional institutions as static entities. While different constitutive values and modes of cooperation are undoubtedly true, one cannot ignore that in some arenas, for example in the field of non-traditional security issues “whose nature is short of the traditional state versus state pattern” (Maier-Knapp 2010: 78), the assertion that the EU and ASEAN models reflect unique forms, underpinned by the regional context, should be loosened (Pennisi di Floristella 2013). It is indeed important to recognize that there have been significant changes both within the European Union and ASEAN, reflecting the continued evolution of the two actors (Rees 2010). These changes have been accompanied by a tendency of regional processes to grow more alike, in terms of both formal structures and modus operandi. The case of disaster management adds to other cases already discussed in the comparative literature, which highlight surprising similarities between ASEAN and the EU that have so far remained undetected.

First, one must note that the conventional view, which sees the EU as operating with a set of supranational institutions, as opposed to ASEAN's intergovernmental structures, does not apply to this case. In general, the activities pertaining to the management of natural as well as man-made disasters have traditionally been remitted to the exclusive domain of nation states in both regions. Differently from other fields where EU members have ceded portions of their sovereign powers to European supranational structures, civil protection is still handled inter-governmentally and reflects the EU member states' reluctance to delegate full disaster responsibilities to the supranational level (Ekengren et al. 2006). Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, which has recently introduced the co-decision procedure and qualified majority in the Council, decisions to take measures within this area were made by consensus in the Council, based on a proposal from the Commission and an opinion from the European Parliament. This process implied that each member had its own veto power in the Council and eventually rendered the European approach similar to the ASEAN consensus-based and intergovernmental practice of cooperation.

Second, despite the fact that member states in both organizations appeared less willing to cede too much authority to supranational institutions and despite ASEAN's preference for informality, both ASEAN and the EU have recently set up formal institutional structures to facilitate disaster cooperation and coordination with regard to the monitoring of, and the response to emergencies, which overstrain nation states' capacities. The advent of major calamities, such as the earthquake in Turkey in 1999 or the events of 9/11, created a sense of urgency for the need of a coordinated EU disaster strategy (Boin et al. 2013: 25). Through the Council Decision of 23 October 2001, the CPM was officially launched as the first regional instrument that allows EU member states to identify shared resources and deploy those resources to deal with a disaster (Åhman et al. 2009; Olsson/Larsson 2009; Boin/Rhinard 2008; Ekengren 2008). Soon after, at the 38th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 2005, ASEAN members also institutionalized cooperation in this field by adopting a comprehensive legal framework for disaster management, and additionally endorsed the idea of creating their own regional structure to cope with disasters, the AHA Center. This is somewhat surprising. Disaster management centers are indeed not common in the world, and the two other existent examples, set up by the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and by the Central American Integration System (SICA), are still in an embryonic stage, tasked only with activities of research and disaster prevention respectively. Unlike the CPM and the AHA Center, they do not have operational hubs for monitoring, coordinating and responding to disaster events.

Third, when looking at the institutional frameworks of the EU and ASEAN's regional disaster management centers we can observe important similarities, which will be explored in the next section by making use of the analytical framework proposed by Bremberg and Britz (2009), and operationalized through the criteria to study disaster management systems identified by Boin et al. (2009; 2013: 25-26; 38-39). In this analysis, I will thus look at: 1) the *goals* that the two organizations seek to pursue and uphold within the field of disaster management (as contained in their legislative frameworks)<sup>4</sup>, and 2) the *associated practices*

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4 Considering the plethora of legal texts ruling civil protection cooperation at the EU level, in this paper the main legal texts that are analyzed are those which lay down the foundations of the European Civil Protection Mechanism: the Council Decision of 23 October 2001, recast by a Council Decision of 2006, and the Council Decision of 5 March 2007 establishing the Civil Protection Financial Instrument and the TFEU. On the ASEAN side, there is only one legal agreement - AADMER. It is worth noting that against the innovations introduced by the Lisbon

for pursuing these goals. The goals are found in the disaster management concepts of the two regional organizations, and are related to the *objective* of their activities, *disaster type* (natural vs. natural and man-made) and the scope of activities, that is the *geographic boundaries* (inside vs. outside) pertaining to their systems. The *practices* to pursue these goals can be analyzed by examining the way in which the CPM and the AHA Center work, in terms of *key actors* that are responsible for disaster management activities; *added value* of the centers (coordination vs. management); *type of activation* of regional assistance (bottom up vs. top down); *type of assistance* offered (voluntary vs. compulsory); and *tools* adopted (less intrusive, for example research and training, vs. intrusive, for example information sharing or monitoring).

### *3.1 Comparing the CPM and the AHA Center: Goals and Practices*

In terms of *goals* that the EU and the ASEAN seek to pursue in the sphere of disaster management one can observe preliminarily that the EU Council decision of October 2001 and AADMER have defined cooperation in this area in broad terms, with the ultimate goal of facilitating cooperation among their members not only to protect people, but also property. The EU Council Decision (Art 1.2) and AADMER (Art. 2) have both included the protection of environmental, economic and social assets as part of the *objective* of regional cooperation, thus potentially broadening the types of disasters that may activate the regional centers. With regard to the *type of disaster* pertaining to the EU and ASEAN systems, the first has opted for an all-hazards perspective, encompassing both natural and man-made hazards, including “technological, radiological and environmental accidents” (Council Decision 2001, Art. 1.2)<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, at the ASEAN level, AADMER (Art. 5) indicates that disaster risks encompass “natural and also human-induced hazards”, without further specifying the concept. The only concrete difference existing between the EU and ASEAN disaster management goals can be found in the sections about geographic boundaries of their activities. While the CPM may also be activated for disasters “outside the Community” (Council Decision 2001, Art.1.2), ASEAN’s activities are limited to the Southeast Asian region only.

A large number of similarities can also be found in the *practices* of cooperation, particularly in the way in which both the CPM and the AHA Center are conceived to work. As argued above, in both regions the primary actors responsible for disaster management activities are nation states. Within ASEAN, the ACDM, comprising the heads of agencies responsible for disaster management, is in charge of coordinating regional activities in this sphere, whereas the ASEAN Secretariat assists all the relevant bodies in formulating disaster policies and programs (ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management 2004-2010: 2007). At the EU level, since the Lisbon Treaty came into effect, the Council has shared legislative power with the Parliament. The European Commission can now propose legislation in civil protection more easily. However, the key actors dealing with civil protection are still the member states. Both the EU and ASEAN systems are thus affected by the fact that - unlike nation states, which are characterized by a coherent

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Treaty, new legislation has been recently adopted at the EU level, namely Decision no. 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, which will however not be discussed in this paper.

5 Since the following Council Decision (2007/779) terrorism has also been included in the scope of EU civil protection cooperation.

disaster framework - it is difficult to speak with one voice and to identify leadership at a strategic level<sup>6</sup>.

In fact, the CPM was conceived only “to support in the event of emergencies and facilitate improved coordination of assistance intervention provided by the Member countries” (Council of the EU 2001, Art.1.2). It does not replace national state agencies, and its added value mostly consists in supplementing national policies, by offering coordination and situation awareness to states incapable of coping with a disaster on their own. It does not undertake concrete operations on the ground. Similarly, cooperation within the AHA Center is not intended to replace national action, but to “facilitate cooperation and coordination among the Parties” (AADMER, Art. 20.1). Particularly, according to EU officials at ECHO and officials at the AHA Center, one of the benefits of these centers is that a stricken member state can appeal to a single information and coordination center instead of having to activate a whole range of bilateral contacts. In brief,

*the CPM and the AHA Center serve as facilitators of assistance coordination between their members, a task which is not easy given the fact that they operate in regional contexts characterized by the existence of a plethora of disaster agencies, diverse capacities and levels of risk exposure.<sup>7</sup>*

As a result of this, even in the most extreme case of disaster “the requesting member state shall be responsible for directing assistance interventions” (Council Decisions 2007/779, Art. 4.7.). Likewise, in the ASEAN region, the AHA Center will never act as a *first responder* and the national agency of the affected country will be in charge of operations on ground.

Another commonality between the CPM and the AHA Center is that they cannot intervene automatically in the face of a disaster. The CPM can be activated upon request, only if “the preparedness of a member state is not sufficient for an adequate response to a major emergency” (Council Decision 23 October 2001), that is in the event of a major emergency, which outstrips a nation state’s capacities, or in the event of an imminent threat of such a circumstance. Alternatively, participating countries may voluntarily pool their civil protection capacities for the affected countries inside and outside of the Union. Similarly, the AHA Center can be activated “in the event that a party requires assistance to cope with a disaster situation”, which overwhelms the nation state (AADMER, Art 20.2), or through a voluntary offer of assistance from other ASEAN members.

There is also a striking similarity between ASEAN and the EU in the way assistance is provided. In both cases provision is voluntary and member states are not formally obliged to assist countries that are unable on their own to deal with a disaster event. In contrast to nation-states’ systems, solidarity clauses<sup>8</sup> endorsed by the legislations of both regional organizations do not presume any formal obligation to assist member

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6 This observation is based on interviews held with technical consultants of the ASEAN-EU Emergency Programme in Jakarta 2014, and secondary source literature on the EU CPM.

7 Interview no. 4 with a High Official of the ASEAN-EU Emergency Management Programme, Jakarta, February 15, 2014.

8 Whereas this clause is included within the AADMER, the solidarity clause at the EU level was initially included in the Constitutional Treaty by agreement of delegates to the European Convention in July 2003, and adopted by EU Heads of State or Government in June 2004. The Lisbon Treaty also includes a solidarity clause in Art. 222. Yet, as noted by Myrdal and Rhinard (2010), its precise meaning and implications are still being assessed.

countries - in contrast to nation states' systems, in which assistance is obligatory - and can be interpreted merely as moral commitments. As a result, in both organizations it may occur that the regional disaster management center is unable to channel any assistance to the affected state. As one official working at the Italian Civil Protection Department highlights:

*[V]ery often we send requests for assistance through the CPM, especially in the summer time for forest fires. But it is often the case that other member countries are unable to offer any assistance through the mechanism, because they have not adequate resources or because their capacities are already being used for other emergencies. There is not any assurance we will receive any form of assistance from the Mechanism.<sup>9</sup>*

Finally, some similarities concern the operational instruments that allow ASEAN and the EU to coordinate their resources. It is important to note that in both organizations these instruments are not the result of one single master plan, but that they have grown incrementally over the last decade. At the heart of the CPM is the Monitoring and Information Center (MIC), recently replaced by the Emergency Response Coordination Center ERCC (2011), which serves as a non-stop communication hub between participating states and the coordinating system. It assures a constant monitoring of on-going and new disasters by way of an internal web-system (CECIS) to log the requests for assistance and to distribute these requests to the member states; and a set of modules formed by autonomous and self-sufficient inter-operable units located in the member states, which can be moved to a disaster site at short notice and shall replace other forms of ad hoc assistance on a bilateral basis.

Additionally, a set of new operational mechanisms has recently been created within ASEAN to support the functioning of the AHA Center, namely the Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS). It serves as a multi-hazard event-tracking and decision-making support tool, similar to the CECIS, with self-sufficient units to intervene on the ground. These units, the so-called ERAT, initially conceived as comprised only of risk assessment teams, and a Disaster Emergency Response Logistic System for ASEAN (DELSA) comprising stockpiles of relief items and capacity building of the AHA Center and Member States, is located in Subang. The creation of the DMRS is undoubtedly one of the most important developments within the ASEAN disaster management system. Its emergence signals an evident movement beyond the traditional practice of non-interference, towards a more intrusive approach aimed at facilitating information sharing between ASEAN members. In fact, the system serves not only to simply track disaster events but more importantly to log information related to disasters into a central system (for example the number of people affected, the local needs, and the assistance that has been requested and/or offered) and to render this information fully available to all countries in the region (Pennisi di Floristella forthcoming 2015).

Considering this picture, one cannot neglect great similarities between the institutional frames of the CPM and the AHA Center. However, there are also differences, which characterize the organizations. First, although both the CPM and the AHA Center aim to develop activities covering the full disaster-cycle, including all phases of disaster management (prevention, mitigation and aftermath), there is variance in their degree of development. With the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has made a commitment towards a stronger effort to

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<sup>9</sup> Telephone Interview no. 17 with an Official of the Civil Protection Department of Italy, Jakarta January 27, 2014.

improve the prevention component, while the AHA Center has so far focused on monitoring and response activities. Second, although the CPM was originally intended for internal use (assisting EU member states), it has, unlike ASEAN, been increasingly used for the coordination of missions outside of the EU (Boin et al. 2013: 42). Differences have to be noted also with regard to financial resources. At the EU level in 2007, the Civil Protection Financial Instrument was set up to facilitate reinforced cooperation between member states in the field of civil protection<sup>10</sup>. The instrument has been allocated an amount of up to € 189.8 million under the EU's 2007-13 financial framework<sup>11</sup>. By contrast, ASEAN relies on more limited budget. Each ASEAN member contributes the amount of US \$ 30,000, but may contribute additional voluntary funds, collected in the AADMER Fund. As a consequence, ASEAN activities in the emergency response sphere depend largely upon the external support of dialogue partners. For example, the establishment of DELSA was financed through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) to the amount of US \$ 12.2 million. Furthermore, the US supported the ASEAN DMRS, and the EU assists knowledge development in various areas of the ASCC, including DRR, with a budget of € 73 million through the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Instrument (READI) Facility. Finally, in order to assure better coordination and disaster response inside and outside the EU, the Lisbon Treaty foresaw the creation of the position of the Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, currently headed by Kristalina Georgieva. ASEAN also endorsed the idea of strengthening the position of the ASEAN Secretary General as Humanitarian Coordinator in disaster events, but its role and major tasks have not yet been clearly defined.

Despite these disparities, how can we explain the number of substantial similarities, particularly the way in which the ASEAN and the EU disaster management centers have been conceived? Additionally, how can we explain the fact that ASEAN has moved away from its usual processes which have tended to circumvent any form of institutionalization towards endorsing more regulated and ruled-based institutions such as the AHA Center? After all, the latter has been empowered by formal rules and operational mechanisms, which appear to be in concert with those endorsed by the EU in its CPM, “involving more coordinated responses, among other things the sharing of information, the provision of relief and assistance in disaster management, and even more significantly, working towards more coordinated responses” (Caballero Anthony 2010: 7).

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<sup>10</sup> The instrument also covers response and preparedness actions covered by the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism, for example training, exercises and missions.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, within the EU-system up to 55 percent of the costs for transporting assistance can be co-financed by the EU Commission.

*Table 1: Comparison of the EU and the ASEAN Disaster Management Systems Based on Key Criteria*

		<b>CPM</b>	<b>AHA</b>
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objective of Protection</b> <b>Restricted vs. Broad</b>	Broad	Broad
	<b>Disaster Perspective</b> <b>Natural vs. Man-made</b>	All Hazards Perspective (Natural and Man-made)	All Hazards Perspective (Natural and Man-made, but to date activities are limited to natural disasters)
	<b>Geography</b> <b>Inside vs. Outside</b>	Inside and Outside	Inside
<b>Practices</b>	<b>Key Actors</b> <b>National Actors vs. Supranational Actors</b>	National Actors (28 EU Member States + Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) Council and Parliament + Commission	National Actors (10 ASEAN Member States)/ ACDM+ ASEAN Secretariat
	<b>Added Value: Coordination vs. Management</b>	Coordination	Coordination
	<b>Type Of Activation: Top Down vs. Bottom-Up</b>	Bottom-Up: Upon Request/ Voluntary Offer	Bottom-Up: Upon Request/Voluntary Offer
	<b>Type of Assistance</b> <b>Compulsory vs. Voluntary</b>	Voluntary	Voluntary
	<b>Operational Mechanisms</b> <b>Intrusive vs. Non-Intrusive and Informal</b>	Communication Hub and Coordinator of Assistance (former MIC/ ERCC)  Integrated platform to receive and send alerts and details of assistance (CECIS)  Rapid Response Capability (Modules)  Financial Instrument	Communication Hub and Coordinator of Assistance (AHA)  Integrated platform to receive and send alerts and details of assistance (DMRS)  Rapid Assessment Teams (ERAT)/ now changed in response  Logistic Stockpile (DELSA)
		Intrusive	To some extent Intrusive

Source: Adapted from Bremberg and Britz (2009) and Boin, Ekengren and Rhinard (2013)

#### **4. Conceptual Framework: Transfer under Domestic Conditions - Lesson-Drawing and Emulation**

Existing scholarship has not yet attempted to comprehensively explore why different regional organizations are institutionalizing new forms of cooperation as proposed by the case study, yet IR literature offers many possible factors that can explain parts of the process. On the one hand, structuration theorists (Hay 1995: 197) would argue that systemic conditions and challenges prevail over actors' capability to elaborate

their strategies. They might pose important constraints on the agendas of regional institutions, which react to changes in the international system by reshaping their political priorities, redesigning their institutional architecture, and advancing new norms and modes of cooperation. Therefore, under the pressure of systemic factors there might be a tendency by distinctive regional processes to grow more alike. However, similarities arise irrespectively of the behavior of other states as a result of *independent* responses to parallel problem pressures (Hoberg 2001: 127).

By contrast, the literature on policy transfer (Dolowitz/Marsh 1996; Evans 2009), which is used in this study to structure the empirical analysis, would take into account the importance of transnational processes and horizontal pathways as factors to explain marked similarity in the institutional design and cooperative modes of regional organizations. In other words, similar outcomes are analyzed through the lenses of *interdependent* decisions. While for a long time this literature has predominantly focused on policy transfer between states, it is increasingly recognized that processes of transfer can also occur between regional organizations (Stone 2004; Börzel/Risse 2012; Jetschke 2009; Lenz 2012; Katsumata 2011; Jetschke/Lenz 2013). Regional organizations are, in fact, not atomistic structures that make decisions independently from each other (Jahn 2006), but “structures where knowledge about policies, institutions and arrangements in one time and/or place is often used in the development of policies, institutions and arrangements in another time and/or place” (Dolowitz/Marsh 1996: 344).<sup>12</sup>

Generally, the mechanisms through which this knowledge is transferred have been classified along two main continuums: on the one hand, *coercive and voluntary mechanisms* (Dolowitz/Marsh 1996), and on the other hand, *direct and indirect mechanisms* (Börzel/ Risse 2009, 2012). Both *coercive and direct mechanisms* are centered on a top-down approach. They share the view that it is the sender side of the relationship, which uses varying degrees (“harder or softer”) of mechanisms to induce the recipient country to adopt a particular policy, program or arrangement. This can occur through 1) coercion (Di Maggio/Powell 1991: 67); 2) conditionality, externalities or reinforcement by reward (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2004: 673-674); 3) incentives and various programs for assistance (Börzel/Risse 2012: 7); or 4) through forms of socialization (Checkel 2005a: 807-808). Examples of these types of mechanisms span from purely vertical processes such as coercion (Levi Faur 2005) to more horizontal processes of international collaboration, such as securing grants or loans. In the latter case, although an exchange process does occur, the recipient is essentially denied freedom of choice (Evans 2009: 245).

Meanwhile at the other end of the spectrum, *indirect and voluntary processes of transfer* can be considered bottom-up mechanisms of transfer, as they focus on the role that the receiver plays in those processes. That is to say, transfer is not induced by the active promotion of ideas or models, but by local actors who voluntarily borrow programs or arrangements used elsewhere and adopt them to their own political context (Dolowitz/Marsh 1996: 346). Most authors suggest that the catalysts of these processes are domestic dissatisfaction with the status quo, what Rose (1991) has defined as lesson drawing or various forms of emulation (Di Maggio/Powell 1991).

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12 This definition by Dolowitz and Marsh is used as the main conceptualization of transfer in this paper.

Which of these mechanisms are likely to account for processes of transfer from an EU-like disaster management arrangement to ASEAN? Presumably, coercive and direct mechanisms of transfer are not applicable in this case. The EU exerts forms of coercion and conditionality only on its member states or neighboring countries and has limited direct power in the promotion of its policies, institutions and modus operandi in those regions of the so-called far abroad, such as ASEAN (Börzel/Risse 2012: 2). Although, it is true that since the end of the nineties the EU has imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar due to severe human rights violations and the absence of substantial progress towards an inclusive democratization process, sanctions remain irrelevant in our case. Additionally, the EU has made no deliberate effort to promote a model of regional disaster cooperation, such as in the fields of human rights, democracy promotion, or economic and regional integration (Bicchi 2006; Börzel/Risse 2009; Jetschke 2009). Neither has it attempted to persuade and socialize ASEAN members to retool their regional system to cope with disasters. Indeed, it is only recently with the Nuremberg Declaration on the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2007), that disaster cooperation has made a timid appearance as an issue in the ASEAN-EU inter-regional dialogue. And with the adoption of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action, the EU has committed itself for the years 2013-2017 to support ASEAN in developing regional capacities to realize the goal of becoming a disaster resilient community. Moreover, programs for financial assistance have emerged only at later stages, for example with the launch of the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI Project) for the years 2011-2015. It is of equal significance that influential actors such as Japan and the United States have been very supportive of ASEAN in this regard. However, while one should certainly not neglect the ability of technical assistance programs to facilitate the spread of new ideas and instruments, it would be an over-simplification to consider them as direct mechanisms of transfer. On the one hand, they are not dependent on the fulfilment of specific conditions (Jetschke/Lenz 2012: 628), and on the other hand, they may result from the specific request from the recipient side of the relationship.

With respect to the mechanisms most likely to play a role for the case discussed in this paper, we can thus expect that bottom-up mechanisms, heavily dependent on domestic conditions on the recipient side of the relationship, that is ASEAN, are crucial. This can be driven by a domestic demand for new solutions to solve particular problems (learning), or by a desire to acquire domestic or external legitimacy (emulation). In order to clarify, IR scholarship has conceived various definitions of learning, which encompass several distinctive processes and approaches, following either a rational or sociological logic (Bennet/Howlett 1992; Zito/Schout 2009). The outcome of learning has also been explored in different ways. According to Hall (1993), learning involves three different orders that span an arc from the new setting of instruments to a shift in the policy paradigm. More precisely, in his view, *first order learning* involves making minor adjustments while the overall goals and instruments remain the same. *Second order learning* is characterized by a retooling and the introduction of new policy techniques, as a result of dissatisfaction with the past experience; and *third order learning* involves a completely different conceptualization of policy problems and a radical change in the instruments as well as the goals behind a policy (Hall 1993). Other studies focus on mere forms of instrumental learning that do not challenge fundamental organizational values (Zito/Schout 2009). This form of learning, which is considered useful in this study, is, for example, central to the concept of lesson-drawing developed by Rose. In Rose's eyes, policy makers that need to find concrete solutions to problems rationally draw lessons by observing how a prominent or pioneering organization has reacted in a situation similar to their own. This process usually occurs in periods characterized by high uncertainty and a lack of routine (Rose 1991). The idea that the solution adopted by another actor might be

superior, more legitimate and credible (Katsumata 2011) may also act as a catalyst for emulation processes. Moreover, emulation often occurs with the aim to gain legitimacy at a domestic or international level (Katsumata 2011). Typically, the quest for legitimacy results in the adoption of a frame, which is expected to be appropriate in the respective context (Davis/ and Greve 1997).

Nevertheless, the question that needs to be raised now is why ASEAN might be learning from the European Union or emulating its disaster management system? Why is it not learning from or emulating other actors, such as the United States and Japan, which are providing remarkable support for the development of ASEAN's system? Simmons and Elkins (2005: 43) suggest three methods that "cognitively constrain policy engineers to follow", namely: *information cascade*, *availability of models*, and reference group/*familiarity*. An *information cascade* occurs when actors, who face a context of great uncertainty and recognize a problem in the organization of service delivery, try to develop some basic theory on how to solve the problem by reviewing the various solutions available in order to make their decisions (Simmons/Elkins 2005). The *availability of information* about a model is thus essential to make transfer happen. The more information there is available about a certain model, the more likely it will be used as a reference point. However, the availability of a model is a necessary but insufficient condition for activating processes of transfer from the EU as other influential actors might also make their model easily available to ASEAN. By contrast, the third and most important heuristic mechanism, which could explain why ASEAN might opt for an EU-like institutional design and EU-like modes of cooperation, is *familiarity* (Simmons/Elkins 2005). In fact, practices and structures do not spread simply because they are available, but because they are acceptable solutions (Davis/ Greve 1997: 7), that are compatible with the domestic context. From this perspective, we can expect that the ASEAN member states might prefer to adopt practices that resonate with their domestic institutional structures from an actor that is considered familiar. Typically, familiarity occurs in contexts of cultural or political similarity, geographic proximity, shared history or similar economic and political development (Evans 2009: 259; Stone 2004: 552). It is obvious that ASEAN and the EU do not share these common characteristics. However, in the case of disaster management cooperation, ASEAN decision-makers may identify familiar models by comparing other visible institutional characteristics (Simmons/Elkins 2005: 45) such as: 1) the organizational form of a regional organization; 2) intergovernmental cooperation; 3) management of cooperation between several disaster agencies, which differ in terms of structures, capacities and variety of risks. In this sense, the fact that the EU cooperative model in this issue-area is organized in an intergovernmental fashion might render the adoption of the EU's solutions and practices in the ASEAN context more feasible.

## **5. Empirics: The Gradual Transfer of the EU Model of Cooperation in the Sphere of Natural Disasters**

Based on interviews and the analysis of primary and secondary sources, this paper uses process tracing to reconstruct the chronological evolution of the gradual transfer of the EU-type model of disaster cooperation to ASEAN. The method of process tracing offers the possibility to map out one or more potential causal paths leading to the outcome of the transfer process analyzed in this study (Bennett/George 2005: 206-07). Furthermore, process tracing avoids the risk of conducting an analysis that is too detached from

reality (Checkel 2005b). In my case study of disaster cooperation, illustrated in the next sections, I find evidence of an incremental process of rational learning from and emulation of the EU since the set-up of the AHA Center in 2011, whereas, the initial shift in advancing new regional policies and institutions was driven mostly by domestic factors.

### *5.1 The First Phase (2003-2005): The Indian Ocean Tsunami and AADMER. From ASEAN's Failure to an Initial Information Cascade*

In ASEAN, initial concerns about disasters date back to 1971 when the ASEAN Expert Group on Disaster Management met for the first time (Collins 2013: 132; Guilloux 2009: 287). Later on, the Declaration of ASEAN Concord I further stressed the importance of cooperation in this area, recognizing that "natural disasters and other major calamities can retard the pace of development of member states" (ASEAN 1976). This was followed by the ASEAN Declaration on Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters (1976) calling on member countries to cooperate on the improvement of communication for early warning, dissemination of medical supplies, services and relief assistance, and exchange of experts, information and documents.

*The Declaration however, remained only a declaratory document lacking a programmatic vision. Cooperation in this area thus remained fragmented and experts met only one time every two years to discuss technical issues rather than the development of a common ASEAN approach. Disaster management was not felt as a priority to put on the ASEAN agenda, only over the last decade, all ASEAN members suffering from a severe increase in the number of disasters affecting their countries, concretely engaged in a step-change.<sup>13</sup>*

In 2003, ASEAN members made the first regional commitment to create the ACDM as a full-fledged committee comprising the heads of ASEAN National Disaster Management Agencies, instead of experts. Importantly, the decision to hold regular meetings once a year, improved the level of discussion and opened the path for the development of a more programmatic approach, initiated first at a meeting held in Brunei, in December 2003. At this meeting ASEAN members agreed to adopt the ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management (ARPDM) for the period 2004-2010, which endorsed some priority projects, including the ASEAN Response Action Plan, which can be considered the embryonic idea of the AADMER, signed a few months later in July 2005, soon after the Indian Ocean tsunami.

How can we account for these changes in disaster management cooperation? In this phase, the primary impetus for collaborative efforts within this field was mostly driven by domestic factors. First, the idea to institutionalize disaster cooperation can be explained by the new strategic environment at the end of the nineties. Some scholars point out that changes in ASEAN and in domestic politics, particularly among the so-called ASEAN five (namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Singapore), opened the path for the development of a new agenda and the concomitant adoption of new norms and principles of cooperation, which culminated in the Declaration of Bali Concord II, and established the three ASEAN

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<sup>13</sup> Interview no. 11 with a High Official of the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta February 20, 2014.

Communities (Heng 2009: 3). Secondly, the inclusion of non-traditional security challenges and disaster management in the ASEAN agenda can be explained by the severe crises emanating from the financial and economic meltdown, as well as smoke-haze pollution. Both severely tested ASEAN traditional security mechanisms (Wulan/Bandarto 2007: 41-47). Fearing irrelevance and loss of centrality in the eyes of both the international community and civil society, ASEAN thus attempted to revitalize its regional institutions, embarking on a wide array of cooperative projects in economics, social development and non-traditional security (Nesadurai 2009: 92). Notably, through the initiative of Indonesia, it promoted a new concept of comprehensive security embodied in the ASEAN Security Community (Wulan/Bandarto 2007: 41-47). Its members recognized *inter alia* that cooperation was needed to handle “concerns that are trans-boundary in nature, and therefore shall be addressed regionally in a holistic, integrated and comprehensive manner”, and should include disaster management (Declaration of Bali II, point 5).

Thirdly and most importantly, ASEAN’s incremental initiatives in the sphere of disaster management are the result of an increasing exposure of ASEAN countries to a variety of disaster-related events, which have exacted high economic and humanitarian costs in the Southeast Asian region, and have caused displacement and interregional tensions.<sup>14</sup> Suffice it to remember that from 2000 to 2004 the Southeast Asian region experienced an increase in the total occurrence of disasters of approximately 30%, in comparison to the years 1994-2000 (EMDAT Database). Moreover, the fifth assessment (2014) of the International Panel on Climate Change reports an increased frequency of extreme weather-events in the region largely resulting from climate change impact. This sharp increase combined with the inadequacy of national solutions to cope with hazardous events has dictated the reinforcement of cooperative initiatives. The issue of coordination has thus been put into sharp relief and ASEAN has started to search for concrete solutions to mitigate their effects (Caballero Anthony 2010: 2). In this regard, it is worth noting that although some countries have been particularly active in launching some specific initiatives, political leadership of the individual members does not seem to have played a crucial role in advancing cooperation in this area (Pennisi di Floristella forthcoming 2015). Indeed, since most ASEAN countries are experiencing either direct or indirect consequences deriving from natural disasters, they all have a vested interest in enhancing joint actions at the regional level (Pennisi di Floristella forthcoming 2015).

The majority of the officials interviewed also pointed out that the need to find practical solutions to cope with these threats represented the most relevant impetus for progressive institutionalization in this field, which has been felt as a compelling priority in the aftermath of the Tsunami of December 2004. On that occasion, while local communities and national governments organized emergency relief operations supported by a large number of international agencies (Jayasuriya/McCawley 2010), ASEAN demonstrated its incapability in organizing any response. Only after the United States announced the establishment of a core group to coordinate relief efforts, did Singapore call for an ASEAN-organized emergency summit to discuss the crisis (Huxley 2005: 124). This exposed ASEAN to sharp criticism, as summed up in the words of one representative of the AADMER Partnership Group:

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<sup>14</sup> During the Indian Ocean tsunami it is clear that almost 230,000 people died and over one million people were displaced (Jasuriya/McCawley 2010: 2).

*[I]n the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami everybody in Southeast Asia and beyond was asking where is ASEAN? ASEAN credibility was put under strong attack when the two enormous waves severely hit Banda Aceh, at the tip of North Sumatra in Indonesia, and the southern provinces of Thailand. This activated a gradual rethink of the traditional modalities of cooperation and provided the momentum for the negotiation of AADMER.<sup>15</sup>*

Under these conditions, ASEAN members took their first concrete steps to develop an institutionalized disaster management system. However, although the above-mentioned domestic factors spurred these initial efforts, it would be wrong to consider AADMER, and the AHA Center in particular, as a merely internal product and a result of independent decision-making. Independence would, in fact, presuppose that ASEAN policy-makers would not have been informed about the choices made by others in this sphere (Holzinger/ Knill 2005: 786). By contrast, in a context of high uncertainty and the awareness of “ASEAN unpreparedness and weakness in collectively addressing such large scale calamities” (Yong 2005 as quoted by Alles 2012: 157) as well as the compelling need to find practical solutions to advance new forms of regional cooperation, ASEAN started to search for external ideas. In this regard, Bennet (as quoted by Holzinger/ Knill 2005) observes that emulation might be a consequence of time and that the more a problem is perceived as urgent, the more likely it is that an imitation of solutions will occur. In this context, it is worth noting that the ASEAN Secretariat organized a workshop to carry out an intensive study on how national, regional and international actors operate in the sphere of disaster management (information cascade). It is also remarkable that, according to an official at the EU External Action Service “the ASEAN Secretariat tried to engage the European Union to draft AADMER, but at that time the EU was not in the condition to offer any technical assistance to ASEAN”<sup>16</sup>. In this phase, the issue of disaster management was not part of the ASEAN-EU interregional agenda. The EU, through the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), was continuing to operate as a mere humanitarian donor in the Southeast Asian region by supporting, a wide range of community-based projects for disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of local communities’ resilience in synergy with local NGOs.<sup>17</sup>

Against this picture, it is clear that at that time there was no direct effort from the European side to influence the development of ASEAN disaster programs. However, ASEAN’s attempt to get EU support for drafting AADMER suggests recognition of the EU as a legitimate actor in this sphere as well as an interest in the EU’s instruments to cope with disaster risk. Furthermore, “the rush in the negotiation of AADMER by the ACDM, which felt the pressure to come out with something for political and humanitarian reasons”<sup>18</sup> made AADMER “one of the fastest-negotiated agreements in ASEAN’s history, having gone through a mere four months of negotiations”, as has been reported by the former ASEAN Secretary General Pitsuwan

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15 Interview no. 3 with a representative of the AADMER Partnership Group, Jakarta, February 14, 2014.

16 Interview no. 5 with a High Official at the EU External Action Service, Jakarta February 19, 2014. This might be explained by persistent violations of human rights in Myanmar, which became stumbling blocks from the EU side, impeding the advancement of the ASEAN-EU interregional dialogue and agenda, amongst others in the sphere of non-traditional security.

17 Since the nineties ECHO has supported projects in most Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia (since 1998), Indonesia (since 1995), Lao PDR (since 1998), Myanmar (since 1994), the Philippines (since 1996), Thailand (since 1995) and Vietnam (since 1994).

18 Interview no. 5 with a High Official at the External Action Service, Jakarta February 19, 2014.

(Xinhua 2009). The provisions endorsed by AADMER to set up a regional disaster management center as a coordination hub between ASEAN members despite the lack of observable alternative centers at a regional level (with the exception of the European CPM experience), also suggest that some transfer from the EU might have occurred.

### *5.2 The Second Phase (2008 - onwards): Cyclone Nargis and the Establishment of the AHA Center. From Model Availability to a Process of Transfer in the Making*

After AADMER was signed, cooperation in the field of disaster management entered a difficult phase within ASEAN.

*The ratification process of the agreement was indeed complicated by the reluctance of ASEAN members to share national information and logistic resources. Among others, Indonesia was extremely sensitive to the fact that cooperation through AADMER could have potentially implied the mobilization of aircraft and vessels in case of disasters.<sup>19</sup>*

Additionally, setting up a budget for cooperation proved to be difficult, which was one of the reasons why combined efforts in this area did not make significant progress.

Finally, with Cyclone Nargis, another devastating catastrophe struck in the Irrawaddy Delta area in May 2008, causing the deaths of 84,500 people and affecting another 2.4 million people. This represented the second most critical juncture, in ASEAN's path towards disaster management cooperation. In fact, Cyclone Nargis highlighted once again ASEAN's limited institutional capacity, through the lack of both a regional agreement and an operational center (Bellamy/Beeson 2010: 274). Although the ACDM activated some operational mechanisms, such as the rapid assessment teams composed of members of national disaster management organizations, its response was painfully slow and uncoordinated (Bellamy/Beeson 2010: 274). In sum, the experience of Nargis provided the necessary impetus for the ratification of AADMER in 2009, and paved the way for the negotiations regarding the establishment of the AHA Center, which was finally activated in 2011.

According to interviewed officials, ever since the AHA Center became a reality, there has been an interest in knowing more about how the EU works, which has resulted in the active seeking of a partnership with the EU by the ASEAN Secretariat. For instance, the managing director of the crisis response department, in the European External Action Service, Agostino Miozzo, was invited to Jakarta to explore possible avenues of cooperation with ASEAN. On that occasion, it was decided that study visits would be launched by the ASEAN Delegation to European civil protection structures.<sup>20</sup> Thus in June 2012, senior representatives from

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19 Interview no. 16 with high official of the BNPB, Indonesia, Jakarta, February 25, 2014.

20 This was also facilitated by the fact that since early 2011 Myanmar has embarked on a remarkable path of political and economic reforms and has committed itself to introduce democracy. In such a new context the ASEAN-EU interregional cooperation could finally step up.

all ten ASEAN member states finally had the opportunity to examine EU arrangements, visit a number of Monitoring and Information and Coordination Centers, and to meet with officials of Civil Protection, ECHO and the European External Action Service. These visits have provided direct input to for learning more about how the EU coordinates disaster management activities with its member states, and has served to make the EU civil protection model fully available to ASEAN.

Yet, two important questions need to be posed. First, why was ASEAN keen to cooperate with the EU, given the fact that other donors were already supporting its capacities? Second, what was the outcome of these visits? With regard to the first question, most of the officials interviewed highlighted that the EU shared the commonality of being a regional organization with ASEAN. To put it differently, it seemed that the reason why ASEAN was keen to engage the EU was that the latter was regarded as a familiar institution, while all the other donors were mostly seen as providers of technical assistance. *Inter alia*, it is worth quoting one of the high officials at the AHA Center:

*The reason why we are looking at the EU and seeking the partnership with it is that the EU is a regional organization like ASEAN. It shares our same philosophy, unlike the other nation states such as the United States and Japan, which have no idea of what regional cooperation means. To be sure, the ASEAN region faces a higher frequency and magnitude of disasters and the capacities of ASEAN members are more heterogeneous in terms of resources and personnel, furthermore the regional disasters management systems have different stages of development since the EU has already achieved a community status unlike ASEAN. Another big difference is that the EU mobilizes its resources outside its borders. But the principles of cooperation are the same. Therefore, we want to learn from the EU. The EU, has, in fact a long experience of cooperation in this area. The system has been implemented since more than ten years, we don't need to invent anything.<sup>21</sup>*

Another official noted that:

*[T]he European Union is a valuable partner for ASEAN, because it has already established a regional hub to deal with disasters. This is something ASEAN wants to do! Thus, the joint ASEAN-EU visits have been a way for ASEAN to mirror the European Civil Protection system, to look at what it is applicable to the ASEAN context and to copy from it if considered to be adaptable.<sup>22</sup>*

Even more important is the fact that during the 20th ACDM meeting held in Bangkok from 24 to 25 July 2012, soon after the knowledge exchange conducted in Brussels and Rome, the representatives of the national agencies of ASEAN disaster management organizations endorsed a confidential program, which identified the key areas for partnership with the EU for the years 2013-2018. Here the ACDM recognized in particular the value of knowledge exchange as a vehicle to institutionally strengthen the AHA Center and to develop its capacities: the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Secretary General's Office, the ASEAN Humanitarian Coordinator Office, the ASEAN Committee of Disaster Management, as well as individual member states. Importantly, one interviewed official noted that:

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21 Interview no. 6 with a High Official at the AHA Center, Jakarta February 20, 2014.

22 Interview no. 7 with a High Official at the AHA Center, Jakarta February 20, 2014.

*[T]he concrete reference made by the document to EU civil protection modalities of cooperation (ECHO, CECIS, civil protection modules etc.) makes clear that ASEAN is taking as a concrete reference point the EU, particularly the way in which intra-regional cooperation in this area is put on the ground, for the development of ASEAN institutional capacities.<sup>23</sup>*

Following this, a move towards a selective borrowing of EU-like operational mechanisms could be observed. After the official visits, the ASEAN Rapid Assessment Teams (ERAT) were transformed into rapid response teams, mirroring European civil protection modules. Similarly, the in 2012 newly-founded DMRS, funded by the US Government, has been inspired by CECIS with its goal of matching requests of aid and offers of assistance between affected entities and assisting countries in the region. Furthermore, the DMRS should ensure the inter-operability between the regional center and its member states, thus overcoming the risk of insufficient coordination, which can result from both a lack of coherence of aid programs and differences in the objectives of the donors (for example timing of the intervention, or preferred type of assistance). Interestingly, it is also worth noting that the EU has recently launched a European program of technical assistance, the ASEAN-EU Emergency Management Program, with the goal of supporting the development of ASEAN capacities, and defined disaster management as one of the three pillars of its inter-regional agenda with ASEAN for the years 2014-2020.

At present, any evaluation of the ASEAN disaster management system would appear premature since the AHA Center still operates in its initial phase. Nonetheless, it is important to draw attention to the fact that already during typhoon Hayan in November 2013 the AHA Center undertook its first steps to support the national disaster management office of the Philippines. It deployed ERAT teams, established an office on the ground and mobilized resources to provide for emergency assistance. The newly born AHA Center monitored the disaster event together with the office in the Philippines and exchanged relevant information with the other ASEAN partners to determine the intensity of the event. Particularly, Malaysia and Brunei used the AHA platform to offer assistance to the Philippines while Indonesia worked with the center at an informal level.

In conclusion, when interpreting ASEAN changes in the area of disaster management as the result of a gradual process of transfer from the EU, it is important to first exclude potentially alternative explanations. Primarily, it is clear that independent problem solving does not account for these developments since ASEAN has actively looked at other existing arrangements in this field. Second, as most of the interviewees have noted, nation state systems cannot offer a viable solution for ASEAN. The United States and Japan are sovereign states and cannot be compared to a regional organization. When a state is hit by a disaster, the US President can declare a state of emergency and has the duty to intervene. This is neither the case for the EU nor for ASEAN where nation states remain the primary actors responsible for dealing with emergencies and for authorizing any external intervention. In addition to this, nation states do not face the problem of overcoming difficulties in sharing sensitive information between different sovereign states, and ensuring the inter-operability of operational tools of the diverse national agencies, from the fire corps to equipment,

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23 Interview no. 5 with a High Official at the European External Action Service, Jakarta February 19, 2014. These initiatives focus in particular on the sharing of information between the EU and its member states, the mobilization of resources, the training and deployment of resources and personnel coming from different national agencies and the way in which decisions are made.

armies, or naval forces. Finally, the argument that ASEAN could also have learned from other regional organizations is not plausible, since ASEAN bureaucrats are well aware of the fact that no other system in this issue area, has the same degree of operational development and solid structures as the CPM. It should be noted here that SAARC's experts are now trying to get information from ASEAN to build up their own regional capacities.

The only alternative option might have been offered by the United Nations disaster management system, centered on the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors and for coordinating UN emergency assistance (Coppola 2011: 555). However, when looking at the criteria as outlined in table 1, it is clear that the UN model does not correspond to the same institutional logic as the CPM and the AHA Center. The UN system is not conceived as a global and single coordination and information hub, as it does not dispose of a situation room, creating situational awareness or of a discrete platform through which the actors involved in disaster management can closely exchange their data information, make relevant decisions on interventions, and activate the center to request assistance or offer support. Only when a member state is stricken by disaster does the UN provide support to the affected country and, eventually, deploy a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team to assist relief activity coordination and assess damages and needs. Against this background, it is clear that the AHA Center model does not reflect the institutional logic of the UN. Nevertheless, it cannot be *a priori* excluded that in the case of specific mechanisms or activities of training aimed at ensuring the inter-operability between diverse actors acting on the ground, ASEAN might also have looked towards and borrowed from solutions adopted by the UN.

Having said this, it remains hard to believe that the AHA Center is a copy of the CPM. These two institutions remain divided by diverse degrees of development, notably the greater heterogeneity of ASEAN disaster agencies in comparison with European agencies. They also diverge in terms of their constitutive values. Unlike the EU, ASEAN remains reluctant to consider crises beyond natural disasters, due to its strict adherence to the principle of respect for national sovereignty, which acts as an impediment to the advancement of any form of cooperation in the area of man-made disasters (particularly terrorism). This approach prevents the development of a flexible understanding of non-interference. Furthermore, while the EU has adopted a civil protection financial instrument, the principle of equal contributions of ASEAN members to regional activities hampers an adequate provision of resources. Thus, ASEAN's budget remains extremely limited and dependent upon external support. In reality, this difficulty arises also due to the wide disparity in member states' incomes (that is some members, such as Brunei or Singapore, are high income nations, or upper-middle income nations such as Malaysia and Thailand, while others, such as Cambodia and Myanmar, are lower income nations) as well as due to problems deriving from risk sharing. In fact, whereas some ASEAN members have highly structured and equipped disaster management organizations (for example Singapore) and therefore can respond to disaster emergencies more easily without external support, disaster organizations in Cambodia and Laos are still underdeveloped. Finally, with the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty and the recent reform of the CPM, the EU is gradually strengthening the role of the Commission in disaster cooperation and has introduced the co-decision procedure and qualified majority in the Council, while consensus-based decision-making still remains the centerpiece of ASEAN regional cooperation.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has sought to analyze the development of the ASEAN disaster management system from the perspective of the literature on transfer, asking whether ASEAN's new developments have been influenced by the European Union. The study argues that these developments, though strongly conditioned by domestic factors, have also resulted from external ideas, and more precisely from the experience of the European Civil Protection Mechanism.

The empirical part of this work has shown that amongst other domestic factors, the most significant scope conditions accounting for ASEAN changes have been the two mega-disasters, which hit the region in 2004 and 2008. The Indian Ocean Tsunami catalyzed the search for external ideas and led to the rapid adoption of AADMER, while Cyclone Nargis has opened the path for ratification of the agreement and the establishment of the AHA Center. The creation of the AHA Center confronted ASEAN with the need to find procedures and mechanisms, which would allow the Center to work and to coordinate monitoring and response to disasters at a regional level. ASEAN has also been keen to find out more about how the EU works in the field of disaster management. Of course, this search has been motivated by ASEAN's attempts to preserve its legitimacy in the eyes of both the domestic and international community, after its failure to respond adequately in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. Thus a combination of lesson-drawing and emulation can be considered as the underlying mechanisms accounting for the gradual process of transfer from the EU.

It is in the context of uncertainty that a new form of interaction with the European Union has gained new momentum. In this regard, although the process of transfer seems to have been initiated by the receiving side of the relationship, "dictated by ASEAN pragmatism of finding new solutions to cope with its failure"<sup>24</sup>, the new activism of the European Union, including the launch of programs of technical assistance and knowledge exchange, appears to have further facilitated the adoption of EU-like operational mechanisms by ASEAN. It is also remarkable that familiarity acted as the main heuristic mechanism behind the process of transfer. From the evidence of the interviews, the EU model of regional cooperation, rather than its technical solutions to cope with specific disaster risks, is considered most applicable to the ASEAN context, because the EU is considered similar to ASEAN in this domain. Like ASEAN, the EU is a regional organization and faces similar problems of coordinating cooperation between a number of national agencies, differently structured and equipped, and confronted with diverse types of disasters and levels of disaster risk exposure.

Using Peter Hall's terminology (1993), it is clear though, that the output resulting from processes of transfer so far does not seem to have gone beyond second order adjustments in the instruments. It is thus selective and does not imply a change in ASEAN constitutive values. Moreover, it is unlikely that ASEAN will soon reach agreement on an increase in its budget expenditures to cope with disasters, or on the development of forms of cooperation in the area of man-made disasters, which involve issues too sensitive for ASEAN member states. Neither is it probable that the Association will move beyond consensual decision-making due to ASEAN's core principles of defense of national sovereignty, equality and non-interference. Given the fact that the AHA Center is still in its initial phase, and that the EU has now committed to providing consistent technical assistance to ASEAN in the sphere of disaster management, we can at this point talk

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<sup>24</sup> Telephone Interview no. 19, with a High Official at the External Action Service, Jakarta, May 2, 2014.

of a process of transfer in the making. It will thus be interesting to observe whether ASEAN will borrow more elements from the EU in the coming years, and whether the latter will also be interested in taking up something new from ASEAN.

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