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SUMMARY
論文題目: The Online Discourse of ASEAN Regionalism: A User and Content Analysis of Indonesian, English and Japanese Tweets
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This thesis comprises eight chapters. Chapter 1 offers an introduction, background, and points to be carried out throughout the study. ASEAN declared a project with the objective of creating by 2015 an integrated community consisting of three pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) and the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC). Within its goals, it emphasizes both active engagements of the “people”—the general public, not just the elites—and strong collaboration with partner countries outside ASEAN.

Since its establishment in 1967, ASEAN was generally viewed as elite-dominated and therefore the rhetoric of engaging a wider population raised questions. This study suggests four research inquiries: first, how far has ASEAN integration shifted from an elite-centered project to a project owned by actors from all levels of society in the region?; second, to what extent are actors of ASEAN member states interested in the three aspects of integration (AEC, ASCC, and APSC)?; third, in the context of wider regional integration, how do actors of ASEAN member states view Japan, China, and other partner countries, and which aspects of integration are these countries being associated with?; fourth, how is ASEAN as an entity viewed by the populations of its partner countries and which aspects of the integration project attract their interest? Perspectives from Indonesia, a prominent member of ASEAN, will be used as representation of ASEAN’s internal perspective on the above questions. This thesis uses Japan, a long-standing close partner of ASEAN, to answer the questions in regard to external perspective.

Chapter 2 introduces relevant previous research related to the ASEAN Community, its critics, its struggle for more public engagement and surveys on ASEAN awareness. Previous ASEAN studies have focused mostly on high-level diplomacy; however, the spread of democracy in Southeast Asia and the state-led rhetoric of “people-centered” integration increase the need for research that links state and the views of general population.
Surveys to gauge awareness of ASEAN integration project have been conducted and there are studies on civil society organizations’ potential contribution to the process as well. However, several years have passed since these studies were carried out. Following the view that regionalism is very dependent on its actors and is an economic and political artefact with meanings that change over time, there is a need to revisit the question. A brief history of Indonesia’s policy towards ASEAN makes clear the challenge faced in realizing more active public engagement. Theories of regionalism and studies of East Asian regionalism and the actors who define it will give context to help understand ASEAN’s perspective and Japan’s perspective on the region.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of social media research in relation to political activism. Studies on Twitter, particularly on its content characteristics and discussions on its role as an information sharing network; and on influential online opinion leaders will be introduced. Cases of social media research in some parts of Asia, i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan are presented, to give context on how social media users utilize the platform as a political medium. These studies analyze the connection between media and its society by focusing on the power relations between socio-political elements in society, questions of locality and/or nationality on Internet platforms, and question the changing role of Internet media in government and public relations.

The focus in the field of comparative regionalism has been more on formal regional organizations and institutions, and less on informal regionalism and the various ways in which state, market and civil society actors engage in regionalism and regionalization. Employing the concepts of social media and society relation, this study offers an investigation of informal channels of regionalist discourse by observing ASEAN related communication on social media. The latter part of the chapter presents hypotheses constructed against the background of the ASEAN integration project (from Chapter 2) and concepts of social media for political use (Chapter 3) to operationalize the research questions.

Chapter 4 explains the data and details of the methods used for the user and content analysis. Tweets containing the word “ASEAN” were collected as this study’s main data and clustered according to the languages used in the messages, i.e. Indonesian, English and Japanese. Tweets in each
language were then subjected to an influential user analysis and a content analysis. The influential user analysis categorizes users to answer the question of what kind of Twitter users are actively engaging in sharing information about ASEAN, e.g. individuals, community, intellectuals, government institutions, politician, media. Content analysis is conducted in two steps: first, categorization of tweet content that follows the three officially declared pillars of ASEAN Community integration (AEC, ASCC and APSC); second, analyses of which countries are mentioned in the tweets. Descriptive statistics including an overview and explanation of the peaks in ASEAN-related Twitter traffic can be found in the later part of this chapter.

Chapter 5 investigates influential users tweeting about ASEAN in Indonesian, English and Japanese. Calculating an influence score of followers, retweets and mentions, the chapter lists and categorizes influential users in the three languages. Analysis was conducted based on concepts from previous ASEAN and social media researches and on social-political contexts for each language. The investigation was carried out to identify influential users who are opinion leaders in ASEAN-related discourse with the potential to drive the agenda for conversation and influence their followers’ perspectives and behavior on the matter.

To confirm the findings of Chapter 5, Chapter 6 elaborates the content production process and communication strategies employed by some influential Indonesian users. The chapter is based on interviews conducted in December and January 2015.

Chapter 7 investigates the content of ASEAN related tweets: it categorizes tweets according to the three aspects of ASEAN integration (economic, socio-cultural and political security), and according to the countries that are mentioned in the tweets. In regard to country mention analysis, the idea of building a community of Southeast Asian nations cannot be separated from member states’ national agendas. The relations between actors from within and outside ASEAN are relevant factors for the success of the ASEAN integration project. This chapter sheds light on how the users see their own national position and their country’s foreign relations in the context of ASEAN regionalism. It provides evidence about how users are imaginatively bound by their geographical origins, i.e. nation and region, even on online platforms.

Chapter 8 offers conclusions. The chapter answers the research
questions and discusses the limitations of the data and methods. This study suggests that even on the potentially egalitarian platform of social media, the ASEAN integration project has not moved far from being an elite-focused project. Online discourse about ASEAN still largely focuses on the economic rather than the political-security and socio-cultural aspects of integration. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

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