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Regional Cooperation and the Web of Joint Initiatives in Northeast Asia

Anna CHUNG

EM GEM Doctoral Fellow at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB, Brussels) and LUISS-Guido Carli (Rome)

Anna.chung@erasmusmundus-gem.eu

Abstract

The study looks at the recent development of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. There are several obstacles that hinder regional cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea, the three major states in Northeast Asia. Lee and Bae categorize the causes of conflict that lead to different types of conflict in Northeast Asia. They argue that the ontological question of keeping an identity as a nation-state brought about territorial disputes while externalities of domestic politics led to disputes over history.

The study questions whether the institutional cooperation in Northeast Asia progresses despite the impediments explained above. As the first step to understand the path of institutional development that could contribute explaining regional cooperation, the paper analyzes the current cooperation mechanisms and cooperation projects to see how different actors are involved and what are the interactions among them. It goes further to examine how an individual cooperation mechanism develops over time by looking at a case of China-Japan-Korea IT Standards Meeting.

A detailed analysis of current developments confirm both Northeast Asia's rise; and that China, Japan and Korea in the region have started to work together on various policy areas. The analysis of current environmental cooperation institutions reveal that it has not reached a high level of institutionalization or a coordinated structure among various attempts. The cooperation institutions, however, continue to change and they have developed, not as a result of careful plan, but as a living entity affected by small contingencies. The significance of NEA does not end in what hitherto existing conditions, but the direction the region is heading to as observed in joint actions taken together at the global level through CJK IT Standards Meeting and the discussions on Free Trade Agreement. Contingencies arising at present could be an important signal as path dependence with self-reinforcement mechanisms suggests.

1. Introduction and Research Question

The study looks at the recent development of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. There are several obstacles that hinder regional cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea, the three major states in Northeast Asia. Lee and Bae categorize the causes of conflict that lead to different types of conflict in Northeast Asia. They argue that the ontological question of keeping an identity as a nation-state brought about territorial disputes while externalities of domestic politics led to disputes over history. Conflicts of economic interests and international politics are behind maritime contention and arms buildup. (Lee and Bae 2009: 388 – 389)

The societal and organizational cultures in Northeast Asia add to the intricacy embedded in the regional cooperation. The decision making of cooperation in the three states is often regarded as risk management or cooperation of the least common denominators. The perspective of managing risks in decision making focuses on the variance of outcomes or negative outcomes rather than comparing expected outcomes. Instead of working out 'what should be done,' 'what should be avoided' are the main concerns of those involved in the decision making. China, South Korea and Japan often work within several constraints set by different stakeholders, rather than setting a goal and finding ways to achieve the goal.

The study questions whether the institutional cooperation in Northeast Asia progresses despite the impediments explained above. As the first step to understand the path of institutional development that could contribute explaining regional cooperation, the paper analyzes the current cooperation mechanisms and cooperation projects to see how different actors are involved and what are the interactions among them. It goes further to examine how an individual cooperation mechanism develops over time by looking at a case of China-Japan-Korea IT Standards Meeting.

It uses the notion of path dependence in examining different meetings and institutions emerging. The concept presented by Brian Arthur for economics and technology development and developed by North and Pierson in explaining the properties of positive feedback, as well as social settings and mechanisms that generate increasing returns will provide the theoretical background for this research.

2. Northeast Asia as a Region

Northeast Asia (NEA) does not entail clear-cut boundaries, and includes different countries for different purposes. For example, in the case of environmental cooperation, China, the Russian Federation, Mongolia, The Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea), the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Hong Kong and Japan are considered to belong to the regional grouping due to their geographical proximity which calls for response at the regional level.

For the purpose of this study, however, I adopt a narrow definition of Northeast Asia that will only include China, Japan and South Korea following Fawcett's advice of taking critical juncture and the forms of interaction as the important part of defining a region (Fawcett 2004). It is mainly due to the economic growth of China, but this, combined with the developed economies of Japan and South Korea, make NEA an important region. Therefore, I chose the three largest economies in Asia among which close economic interdependence was built after China opened its market in 1990's. China, Japan and South Korea are referred to as 'the major Northeastern core states' (Kim 2004) and are members of ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) plus Three, together with ASEAN.

Whether complementariness from differences or shared values and interests from similarities foster regionalization is a topic of further discussion, but it should be taken into account how similarities and differences can be defined. Seunghwan Lee claims that the "Asian value" that often represents Confucian traditions as described by Hermann Kahn and Ezra Vogel has been combined with liberalism, individualism and democracy with the influence of the western world, and the values have diverse nuances according to political and social environment of each country in East Asia. (Lee 2011) It is therefore important to understand not only the commonalities from traditions, but also the past experiences that have influenced the three states and the changes that are taking place currently.

Breslin points out that regionalization in Asia cannot be compared to regionalization of Europe of the same time, but to Europe at the same level of regionalization phase and cultural and societal dimensions in Asia should be considered. (Breslin 2007) I would like to add one more point that it is important to acknowledge an important difference in the setting of regionalization that signs of globalization was observed before regionalization in NEA, and this also affected how regional cooperation has been developing. Earlier interactions among three states were often responses to international regimes or regional projects of international organizations as can be observed in environmental cooperation and their linkage with ASEAN. In the last decade, however, activities initiated and carried out by three countries have grown from little to substantial.

Transferring the knowledge of International Relations to NEA may not be enough to comprehend the whole extent of changes taking place. While it would not be deemed improbable, we have to bear in mind that the discipline of International Relations may be equipped with paradigms that do not fully correspond to the experience of NEA. Chun asserts that periodic distinctions, organizing principles and the way those two are combined should be discerned in explaining issues in the arena of international politics in NEA. (Chun 2011)

Development of Regional Cooperation in NEA

The trilateral cooperation has expanded tremendously during the last 15 years: It was only in 1992 that China and South Korea normalized their diplomatic relations, and the first trilateral summit meeting among China, Japan and Korea was an informal meeting at the margin of the ASEAN+3 Summit in 1999. The notion of 'the time of change' can be drawn from this setting. Streeck and Thelen discern of settled and unsettled periods that Ann Swidler used in Sociology, and refer unsettled periods as when a social transformation takes place. They connects Swidler's work to historical institutionalism and claim that the unsettled times are also "historical junctures where new cultural complexes make possible new or reorganized strategies of action". (Streeck and Thelen 2005:7) The time of change involves uncertainties, and the ability to form individual's expectation diminishes when uncertainties are embedded in the social structure. The uncertainty goes further than the uncertainties of each other, but also includes reactions from the rest of the world and uncertainties about future environment.

Regionalization in NEA has been primarily led not by political and institutional arrangement, but by market forces such as a geographical proximity and a shift of global economic gravity towards the region especially due to China's emergence. The financial crisis in 1997/98, however, awoken the common difficulties faced by the states in the region and had endorsed the regional identity.

China, Japan and South Korea were grouped together under the framework of ASEAN at an informal summit meeting in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting had developed into what has since become known as ASEAN+3 cooperation. The importance of financial stability and the need for a regional financial safety net became apparent after the financial crisis, owing to the severity of the crisis and the disappointment with the IMF program based on harsh structural reforms. The results of deliberations of ASEAN+3 states had lead to the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CHIM). What started as a network of bilateral currency swap arrangements became the most significant collective response of ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea to the global financial crisis. An enlarged US\$120 billion swap arrangement (CMI) took effect in March 2010 with plans to become CHIM, and an independent regional monitoring and surveillance unit were established in 2011.

The trilateral summit have been held independently from ASEAN since 2008, paving the way to "more than 50 trilateral consultative mechanisms including 17 Ministerial meetings and over 100 cooperative projects" as of 2012.¹ The recent activities discussed at the summit include completion of feasibility study for trilateral FTA and establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat which was inaugurated in Seoul, September 2011.

NEA and Regional Institutions

¹ <http://www.tcs-asia.org/about/overview.php>, retrieved on 10 July 2012.

There are several institutions of which countries in East Asia and in the wider region are members. ASEAN has been at the center of building regional institutions, and the figure below illustrates members of regional institutions in East Asia. The development of institutions in East Asia is not a topic covered in this paper, but the relations and overlaps of these institutions contribute to understanding institutional choices CJK may have.

Figure 1: Regional Institutions in East Asia



Source: Adopted from Chun and Park, *Integration Strategy for East Asia: Building a Growth-Stability-Solidarity Community*

3. Neo-Institutionalism and Path Dependence

This paper presents joint initiatives and consultative mechanisms in NEA in various policy fields involving governmental and non-governmental actors, bearing in mind that regional cooperation is shaping rapidly.

Path dependence is used to capture the particularity of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia to ponder upon the direction of such cooperation that the development of an institution can partly be explained by decisions taken in the past. Path dependence in this thesis, however, does not mean stability or punctuated equilibria. As Streek and Thelen argue, “there are severe limits to models of change that draw a sharp line between institutional stability and institutional change and that see all major changes as exogenously generated.” (Streek and Thelen 2005)

Though path dependence and evolution of institutions are often regarded as the argument used by Historical Institutionalism (HI), the foundation of the theory does not conflict with Rational Institutionalism (RI). It rather can usefully complement RI by bringing the temporal dimension to give dynamics for the analysis of institutions.

Regional cooperation mechanisms entail a wider concept than legalization and authority. Thelen asserts that “(the closest general concept of an institution is) a social regime. By regime we mean a set of rules stipulating expected behavior and ‘ruling out’ behavior deemed to be undesirable”. (Thelen 2003) It is light institutionalism, and the rules incorporate both written and unwritten rules with or without punishment when violated.

The regional cooperation has a long-time effect of identity, trust building and institutional development. Decisions made at these institutions can have a long-term effect as setting a common IT standards influence performance of related businesses in the region and its impact on the global governance of IT standards. This fits well with the slow moving-process of politics Pierson mentions.

The paper does not have to assume shared norms, while short-sighted decisions will result in non-cooperation. This means that economic reasoning can be the basis of development of these institutions while the definition of interest should be interpreted widely to include future benefits and indirect benefits.

The concept presented by Brian Arthur for economics and technology development and developed by North and Pierson will provide the theoretical background for this research.

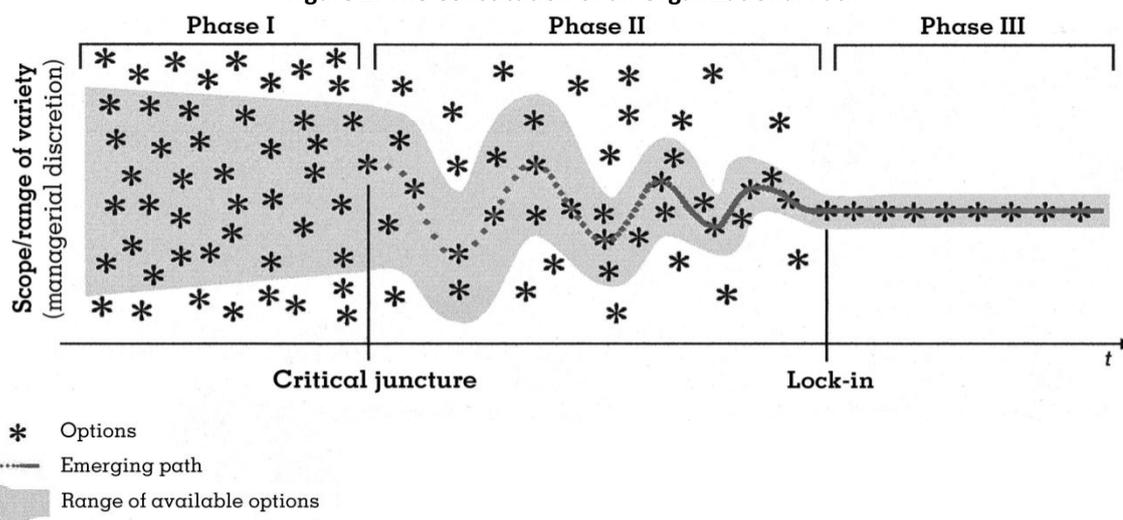
I do not refer to path dependence as history repeating itself, but random or small events creating path that affect future outcomes. Path may not be efficient at times due to uncertainties but over the time certain path is built.

The neoclassical economics are often based on diminishing returns, therefore converging to one (or more) equilibrium fail to explain cases where there are increasing returns. Path dependence claim that the increasing returns through self-reinforcement process can explain how certain outcome is possible for economic and technological development. North persuasively argued institutional emergence and change with the characteristics of technologies that bring increasing return fits well with properties of institutions which ‘are the rules of the game’. New institutions often require high start up costs, and they induce significant learning effects as actors become more skillful and coordination with other organizations improves. Institutions also reduce uncertainty with increased prevalence of contracting. (North 1990:93~5)

Arthur’s claim on increasing returns and positive feedback is based on the properties of i) unpredictability, ii) inflexibility, iii) nonergodicity and iv) possible inefficiency. The outcome of a path cannot be predicted ex-ante (unpredictability), but it is more difficult to shift paths after a self-reinforcement process develops (inflexibility). Path dependence has more than one equilibria contingently selected along the path (nonergodicity), and in the long run selected paths could be inefficient. Unpredictability and inflexibility seem contradictory to each other, but each refers to different stage of a self-reinforcement process.

Sydow, Schreyogg and Koch conceptualize the process of organizational path dependence along three distinctive phases to explain different traits attached to each phase. Phase I is pre-formation of path dependence when events are random, which is then followed by the formation phase, and finally lock-in phase. (Sydow et al. 2009)

Figure 2: The Constitution of an Organizational Path



Source: Sydow et al. "Organizational Path Dependence: Opening the Black Box", Academy of Management Review

Discerning phases may fail to grasp the essence of path dependence that explains gradual and incremental changes of institutions, but the graph above in a way helps simplifying the analysis of this paper. Since the cooperation among three states has already started, it has passed the stage of randomness, but has not reached the lock-in phase. It also fits well into the conceptual understanding that the path of cooperation is being created in NEA. It could be summarized that NEA is in moving from unpredictability to less flexible position while experiencing inefficiencies of a path.

The core analysis is mainly indebted to the insights of Pierson. The regional cooperation is a slow-moving causes and outcomes, and its history is not long in Northeast Asia. It means that in accordance with the importance of sequencing – how small action at an earlier stage of the path creation can have a great impact on the outcome – what is happening now would have a significant value in the development of institutions and regional cooperation.

The circumstances in Northeast Asia suggest the high density of institutions and intrinsic complexity and opacity which provide a favorable setting for positive feedbacks. (Pierson 2004: 30) Since the region is still in the process of creating path, unpredictability prevails where a description of alternative paths or possible inefficiencies or sub-optimality of the current path would be a haste and inaccurate conclusion. Therefore, the paper is not about having a understanding of an outcome that has followed path dependence until it becomes stable, but rather trying to gain insights of the current development borrowing theoretical understanding from path dependence.

Properties of institutions

The study will first look at the properties of institutions that may affect the positive feedback mechanism. The properties include representation of actors, relevance to industries, and the field of cooperation.

It is important to determine contingencies which may affect institutional development. Contingencies in path dependence do not need to be random. They are small events which could be strategic. In understanding contingencies, the sequencing and timing of the occurrence are important because, in the long run, they affect the outcome differently. These contingencies induce self-reinforcement through the four mechanisms of coordination, learning, adaptive expectation and complementary effects. In regional cooperation institutions, I define the mechanisms as follows.

Coordination effect is when the benefit of an individual increases when another person adopts the same option. As Pierson states, coordination is especially important in politics as public goods often have nonexcludability. In the case of many cooperation activities of the Meeting, the outcome cannot be reached unless members agree on the same option, and therefore creating coordination effect. Complementarity of coordination effect can also be related to spill-

over effect of what functionalists would argue. This means that cooperation or integration in one policy area would induce further cooperation or integration within or outside the policy area of concern.

The learning effects could simply be the upgrading of the skills of the actors involved, but they may also be derived from the role played by the epistemic community in providing information about the topic of discussion and building consensus through their network to persuade government officials. The fostering of multilateralism could also be defined as a learning effect as more efficient consensus building would definitely benefit those involved.

There are two ways in how adaptive expectation functions. It could widen the time horizon of actors (maybe through diffuse reciprocity of states), or it could help better understand the other's logic and strategies. Uncertainties will diminish with better understanding of the rules of the game.

The advantage using path dependence and positive feedback theory is that the evolution of technology or institutional development can be understood by its properties and endogenous mechanisms, but it can be criticized for being too open at the beginning and too determinant towards its lock-in period. When applied to an empirical case, this would mean that it is difficult even to identify different paths available for an institution that is at the early stage of its development, and changes would only be brought in by exogenous forces at the later stage.

The assumption of sub-optimal path suggests that we could have a superior path than the one we are experiencing now, if the past had been different (David 1985). The problem here is that we cannot determine what the present could be like given a different past as it is shaped stochastically with non-ergodicity.

Shiping claims that "path dependence itself is not a theory of institutional change but only an aspect of the dynamics of institutional change that needs to be explained" and "overemphasizing path dependence also makes theories of exogenous changes". (Shiping, 2010:31)

Next section first looks at the activities of regional cooperation to consider the emergence of CJK as a region in East Asia, then takes a case of the China-Japan-Korea IT Standards Meeting to see whether increasing returns and self-reinforcement mechanisms can be observed in individual cooperation institution.

4. Analysis of Cooperation Activities

Regional cooperation in NEA does not have a long history, and therefore the analysis of the past and the current activities may not capture the potential and the direction of the cooperation. Most of cooperation activities are in the form of regular meetings and joint projects on research and exchanges of information and personnel. The focus of this paper is to provide an overview of joint activities and to examine how those initiatives interact with one another.

Profile of Meetings

Figure 3 illustrates the number of activities held in NEA each year between 1999 and 2011 by different participants and by policy fields. The activities are listed in annex 1 and the holding of meetings and output of joint initiatives are tracked down and counted. Activities involving other partners such as ASEAN are excluded from the analysis. The figures do not reflect the depth of cooperation as it does not distinguish the nature of activities and would not embrace adequately conclusion of agreements or constant communications and interactions among officials and research institutes to produce one output. It should still be noted that the governments of China, Japan and South Korea are the main drivers of consultative mechanisms and joint projects as inter-governmental activities account for two thirds of the total activities. The research institutes that are involved in producing joint studies are mostly government affiliated

institutions who already coordinate the contents of those outputs closely with their respective governments.

Path dependence of cooperation would require a certain level of autonomy of institutions, but cooperation has been affected by external factors such as disputes over history textbook in 2005 and visits of Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's to Yasukuni Shrine which ignited criticisms and protests in China and South Korea. The trilateral summit had not been held in 2005 and 2006, and it was only after the next Prime Minister Abe succeeded in September 2006 that the mutual visits among three countries resumed. Only two cooperation activities, the Trilateral Junior Sports Exchange Meet and the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting, existed before the summit in November 1999.

The actual holding of a summit also affects other cooperation activities as some activities are follow-up of projects proposed during the summit (i.e. IT Ministers' Meeting, Cooperative Nuclear Safety Initiative and Working Groups on FTA Feasibility Studies) or trilateral meetings at ministerial or director-general level meetings are used to coordinate and provide inputs for a summit as observed in meetings on foreign affairs and science and technology. The occurrences of cooperation activities are plotted on a timeline for various participants in Figure 4 and the preparation steps for working level official meetings to ministerial then to summit can be spotted especially for the cooperation activities in political sphere.

Figure 3: Number of Cooperation Activities Occurred among China, Japan and Korea

| Year | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | Total | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-----|
| Number of meetings held | 4 | 8 | 7 | 21 | 19 | 37 | 34 | 44 | 59 | 46 | 54 | 57 | 57 | 447 | |
| Breakdown 1: Participants | Gov. officials | 3 | 5 | 2 | 14 | 11 | 21 | 24 | 29 | 41 | 30 | 39 | 39 | 35 | 293 |
| | Mixed Representations | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 87 |
| | Open to Public | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 31 |
| | Research Institutes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 22 |
| | Others | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| Breakdown 2: Policy Fields | Politics | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 13 | 56 |
| | Administration | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 25 |
| | Economics | 0 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 12 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 27 | 18 | 26 | 31 | 24 | 226 |
| | Environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 56 |
| | society and culture | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 84 |

Figure 4: Occurrence of Cooperation Activities by



The gravity of the web of cooperation activities in NEA lies on the Trilateral Summit Meeting. The start of the summit on the sideline of ASEAN+3 Summit in 1999, the Joint Declaration on the Promotion of Tripartite Cooperation in 2003, the inauguration of a separate summit and the Action Plan for Promoting Trilateral Cooperation in 2008, and the launch of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat all mark important occasions in the development of regional cooperation in NEA. This does not, however, indicate that only a political reasoning prevails in NEA. When several political meetings were cancelled between 2005 and 2006, working level meetings to improve business environment and to prepare foundations for the Investment Agreement that was officially signed in May 2012 were still active. Similarly, the leaders of three states did not have a trilateral meeting on the occasion of the 14th ASEAN+3 Summit in November 2012, while Trade Ministers announced the launch of CJK FTA at the time.

The cooperation institutions are often not progressed enough to endorse new initiatives in NEA. The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat that has inaugurated in September 2011 so far has focused on public diplomacy rather than coordinating cooperation projects or initiating new projects. It is therefore premature to relate path dependence to the overall cooperation framework in NEA, but the notion of feedback and self-reinforcement can be observed in some institutions that are relatively independent from the complexities of politics. The next section takes a case of the China-Japan-Korea IT Standards Meeting to illustrate how path dependence can be understood in the progress of its institutional development.

Path Dependence of an Institution: Case of CJK IT Standards Meeting

The 1st CJK Standard Information Exchange Meeting took place on 26 June 2002 in Seoul with the delegations from four Standards Development Organizations (SDOs), Association of Radio Industries and Business (ARIB) of Japan, China Communications Standards Association (CCSA) of China, Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA) of South Korea, Telecommunication Technology Committee (TTC) of Japan, lead by their Secretary Generals and Director. The name of the meeting shows that the agenda of the meeting was at the information exchange level and fostering interactions among the SDOs. Report published by TTA in its bimonthly journal explains that the meeting was to provide a friendly environment for further cooperation.

“Though TTA proposed the first Meeting, we were not in the position of suggesting the nature or the objective of the Meeting. TTA had decided to invite delegations from China and Japan at the ‘Annual Meeting of IT Standards in Korea’ on 25 June 2002 that is at the core of driving standardization process in Korea. It was the first time that a foreign delegation had participated in the annual meeting, and believed that the participation facilitated in building trusts and friendship among the 4 SDOs.” (Jin et al. 2006)

The current name of “the CJK Meeting on Information and Telecommunication Standards” was determined in the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in the second Meeting by the four members and was used from the third meeting.

B3G (Beyond 3rd Generation) WG was the first and the most active WG producing joint contributions at ITU and White Paper on Forecast of Mobile Broadband Development in the Asia-Pacific Region (the White Paper). The exchange of information to have a common understanding and to establish a common vision in NEA were the main activities for the first 5 years, but moved towards having a common position starting with the preparation of the White Paper. During the joint preparation of the White Paper, Japan contributed the most on system requests, South Korea on central technologies and China on the achievements of academic projects that have taken place. The submission of the joint White Paper to ITU was not decided at the start of the study, but rather discussed and deliberated over different plenary and WG meetings which were approved in 2011 and jointly presented to ITU in October 2011.

Though the cooperation projects and the discussions have been expanded in the last decade, the nature of cooperation remains at inter-institutional as there is no pooling of financial or human resources have taken place. It was decided that the host institution is responsible for all the expenses occurring for the plenary and working group meetings, while the institutes were responsible for different sections of joint papers. The Meeting does not have a website, and the organizations have links to list of documents on the websites of host organizations.

The learning effects appeared the first as it was the original objective at the start of the Meeting and remained an important part. The activities of organizations are shared for the first part of plenary meeting. Since the Meeting deals with the advances or directions of changes in technologies that are under development, regular interactions among stakeholders such as private corporations, research institutes and national standards organizations help finding common grounds for joint actions. The learning effects are also closely linked to the coordination effects. In order to have the coordination effects such as producing a joint white paper to be presented at an international setting, constant communication is required through which learning effects can occur.

The coordination effect from having the same IT standards in the three countries has not occurred yet. The Meeting has gone through the periods of focusing on information exchanges (2002 – 2005) and producing joint contributions at global level (since 2006). The recent decision during the 11th Meeting that took place in March 2012 to work together on M2M is may result in the coordination of domestic standards which will create a larger market base for taking the same option, but the result is yet to be seen.

Whether the Meeting is independent enough from the member organizations and states for its self-reinforcement mechanism to lead its development is still questionable. Establishment of a new working group, for example, follows a pattern of having a discussion over a workshop or in an existing working group meeting, proposing the establishment of new working group at a plenary meeting, then having a decision to establish a new working group. However, each stage requires one meeting in between to allow members to have internal discussion at their organization, and the minutes of meetings do not provide cases where unexpected decisions were made, or positions of an organization has changed during one Meeting. In this regard, institutionalization itself becomes an important variable to explain enhanced cooperation. The activities of TACT, in which formal procedures are introduced and discussions on the institutionalization of the Meeting are shaped, indicate that the Meeting is at its early stage of the path creation.

The changes in the nature of the cooperation could be observed from another angle of the Meeting becoming less transparent. The Minutes of the 5th Meeting indicates that a request of the Information Officer at the Delegation of the European Commission in Beijing to attend the Meeting as an observer has been declined as the Meeting is premature to include outside participants, though such participation could be open for discussion in the future. The report of TACT proposed in the 8th Meeting that the documents including presentation materials, minutes of every plenary and working group meetings and the list of participants of the Meeting which were all available publicly should only be shared by the members of the Meeting. This may indicate that a certain level of trust has been built among the participants to exclusively discuss specific issues and share information. Such decision is one of contingencies creating the path of the development of the Meeting. Cooperation within the Meeting may be elevated following the decision while it may not benefit cooperation at global level if other key organizations are blocked from the activities of the Meeting.

5. Conclusion

Northeast Asia is rising, and China, Japan and Korea in the region have started to work together on various policy areas. The analysis of current environmental cooperation institutions reveal that it has not reached a high level of institutionalization or a coordinated structure among various attempts. The cooperation institutions, however, continue to change and they have developed, not as a result of careful plan, but as a living entity affected by small contingencies. The significance of NEA does not end in what hitherto existing conditions, but the direction the region is

heading to as observed in joint actions taken together at the global level through CJK IT Standards Meeting and the discussions on Free Trade Agreement. Contingencies arising at present could be an important signal as path dependence with self-reinforcement mechanisms suggests.

Annex 1: List of Cooperation Activities in NEA

| Name | Area | Main participants | Inauguration | Type of Cooperation |
|---|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Trilateral Summit Meeting | Politics | Leaders | 2008 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Summit Meeting on the occasion of ASEAN+3 Summit | Politics | Leaders | 1999 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting | Politics | Minister | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Senior Foreign Affairs Officials' Consultation | Politics | Officials | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Three-Party Committee | Politics | Minister | 2004 | Project |
| Trilateral Counter-Terrorism Meeting | Politics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2011 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Heads of Government Agency Meeting on Disaster Management | Politics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2009 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-Generals' Meeting on Disaster Management | Politics | DG | 2009 | Consultative Mechanism |
| The Tripartite meeting on Earthquake Disaster Mitigation | Politics | DG | 2004 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Northeast Asian Top Regulators Meeting(TRM) on Nuclear Safety | Politics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2008 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Latin American Affairs Director-Generals' Meeting | Politics | Officials | 2006 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Policy Dialogue on Africa | Politics | DG | 2008 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Tripartite Partnership Exchange Program | Politics | Officials | 2011 | Project |
| Trilateral Expert Meeting | Politics | Officials | 2011 | Project |
| Seminar on East-Asia Earthquakes Studies | Politics | Mixed | 2011 | Project |
| The Trilateral Agricultural Ministers Meeting | economics | Minister | 2012 | Consultative Mechanism |
| The Trilateral Fisheries Institutes' Heads Meeting | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| The Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Water Recourses | economics | Minister | 2012 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Joint Session and Roundtable Meeting on the Trilateral Joint Session and Roundtable Meeting on the occasion of the World Water Forum | economics | DG | 2006 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Northeast Asia Standards Cooperation Forum (NEAS Forum) | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-Generals' Meeting | economics | DG | 2010 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting | economics | Minister | 2003 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Negotiations for the Trilateral Investment Agreement | economics | Officials | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Business Summit | economics | Business | 2009 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Yellow Sea Rim Economic and Technological Conference | economics | Mixed | 2001 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Economic Director-General Meeting | economics | DG | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics | economics | Minister | 2006 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-Generals' Meeting on Transport and Logistics | economics | DG | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Northeast Asia Port Director-General Meeting | economics | DG | 2001 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting(TCHM) | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting among the Commissioners of Patent Office | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2004 | Consultative Mechanism |

| Name | Area | Main participants | Inauguration | Type of Cooperation |
|---|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Heads' Meeting of IP Training Centers of three countries | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2010 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Finance Ministers' Meeting | economics | Minister | 2005 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Tripartite Governors' Meeting | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2009 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Information and Telecommunication Ministerial Meeting | economics | Minister | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting (THMM) | economics | Health ministers | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Director-General level Meeting on Elderly Welfare Policy | economics | DG | 2010 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Director-General Meeting on Pharmaceutical Affair | economics | DG | 2008 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Forum for Agricultural Policy Research in North East Asia (FANEA) | economics | Research | 2003 | Project |
| Trilateral International Jellyfish Workshop | economics | Research | 2004 | Project |
| The Trilateral East Asia Symposium for Foot and Mouth Disease | economics | Research | 2011 | Project |
| Northeast Asia Cooperation Meeting on Reclaimed Wastewater Use in Urban Area | economics | Research | 2010 | Project |
| Meetings for the Improvement of Business Environment (Deputy Director Level) | economics | Officials | 2005 | Project |
| Meetings on the Legal Framework concerning Trilateral Investment | economics | Officials | 2005 | Project |
| Joint Study Committee for China-Japan-Korea FTA | economics | Mixed | 2010 | Project |
| Joint Research on Possibilities and Prospects for the China-Japan-Korea FTA | economics | Mixed | 2003 | Project |
| Joint Study Group on the Possible Trilateral Investment Arrangements | economics | Research | 2004 | Project |
| Northeast Asia Port Symposium | economics | Mixed | 2010 | Project |
| The Northeast Asia Logistics Cooperative Development Forum | economics | Mixed | 2003 | Project |
| Working Groups' Meeting on the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) | economics | Officials | 2009 | Project |
| 3G and Next-Generation Mobile Communications Working Group | economics | Officials | 2004 | Project |
| Next Generation Internet Working Group | economics | Officials | 2004 | Project |
| Digital TV and Broadcasting Working Group Trilateral Information and Communication Cooperation | economics | Officials | 2004 | Project |
| Working Group Meeting on ICT Network & Information Security Policy | economics | Officials | 2004 | Project |
| Trilateral Policy Forum on Telecommunications Services | economics | Officials | 2004 | Project |
| Trilateral RFID/Sensor Network Sub-Working Group | economics | Mixed | 2005 | Project |
| Trilateral IT International Cooperation Working Group | economics | Officials | 2006 | Project |
| Cooperation and exchanges between National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan, China Rehabilitation Research Center, People's Republic of China and National Rehabilitation Center, Republic of Korea | economics | Officials | 2003 | Project |

| Name | Area | Main participants | Inauguration | Type of Cooperation |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Tripartite Environmental Education Network (TEEN) | environment | Public | 2000 | Project |
| Seminar on Sound Material-Cycle Society, Circular Economy and 3R | environment | Mixed | 2006 | Project |
| E-waste workshop | environment | Mixed | 2007 | Project |
| Tripartite Policy Dialogue in Chemicals Management | environment | Officials | | Project |
| Tripartite Roundtable Meeting on Environmental Industry | environment | Mixed | 2001 | Project |
| East Asia Environment Information Center | Environment | NGOs | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| CJK Meeting on IT Standards | economics | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Cultural Shuttle Project | society and culture | Public | 2007 | Project |
| CAMPUS Asia | society and culture | Public | 2010 | Project |
| Expert Workshop for the Trilateral Science and Technology Cooperation (with focus on environment and energy technology) | society and culture | Research | | Project |
| Symposium on Educational Trav | society and culture | Mixed | 2006 | Project |
| Trilateral Youth Friendship Meeting | society and culture | Public | 2007 | Project |
| Trilateral Youth "Future Forum" | society and culture | Public | 2012 | Project |
| Trilateral 3A Soccer Champions Cup (2003-2007) | society and culture | Public | 2003 | Project |
| Trilateral Junior Sports Exchange Meet | society and culture | Public | 1993 | Project |
| Northeast Asia Trilateral Forum (NATF) | society and culture | media | 2006 | Project |
| Working Level Meeting of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Three Countries | society and culture | Officials | 2005 | Project |
| Environmental Protection Audit Workshop | society and culture | Mixed | 2008 | Project |
| Symposium on Personnel Administration (Trilateral Personnel Policy Network) | society and culture | Officials | 2006 | Project |
| Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) | environment | Minister | 1999 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Tripartite Director-General Meeting for TEMM | environment | DG | 2009 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Cultural Content Industry Forum | society and culture | Mixed | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-General's Meeting among the Education Ministries | society and culture | DG | 2006 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation | society and culture | Minister | 2007 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-Generals' Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation | society and culture | DG | 2002 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Trilateral Tourism Ministers' Meetin | society and culture | Minister | 2006 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Three Countries | administration | Head of Gov. Agencies | 1998 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Meeting of Heads of Personnel Authorities (Trilateral Personnel Policy Networks) | administration | Head of Gov. Agencies | 2005 | Consultative Mechanism |
| Director-Generals' Meeting (Trilateral Personnel Policy Network) | administration | DG | 2005 | Consultative Mechanism |

Source: Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (<http://www.tcs-asia.org>)
Telecommunication Technology Association (<http://www.tta.or.kr>)
East Asia Environmental Express Messenger (<http://www.enviroasia.info>)
Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (<http://www.mest.go.kr>)

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