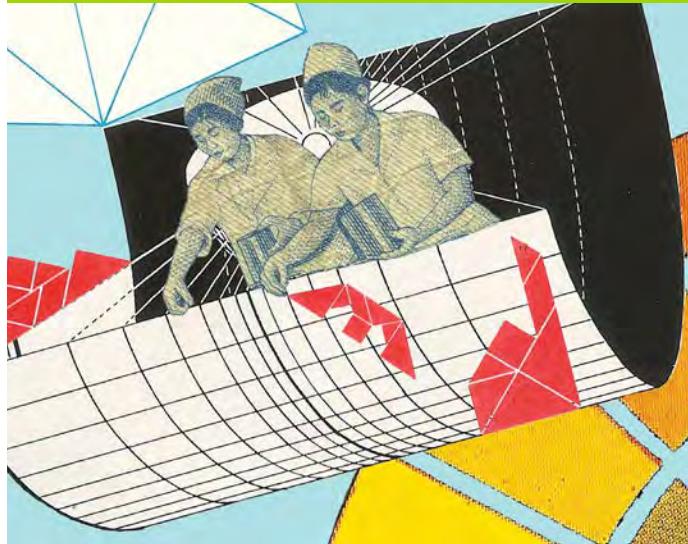


50 YEARS OF ASEAN – STILL WAITING FOR SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE



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50 Years of ASEAN - Still Waiting for Social and Ecological Justice

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN - AN INTRODUCTION

In 1967 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded. This dossier sheds light on the institutional framework of ASEAN and analyses with contributions by civil society and academia, where social and ecological justice has, or should have, its place in Southeast Asia.

**BY JULIA BEHRENS, MANFRED HORNING,
FRANSISKUS TARMEDI**



50 years of ASEAN – Still waiting
for social and ecological justice

CREATOR: INES MEIER.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) today finds itself in a completely different global context than in 1967, its founding year. Together with geopolitical circumstances, the association has changed, too. In the beginning, ASEAN came together to balance out political conflicts between Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia that existed as one consequences of the state-building process and decolonialization.

In the following years, ASEAN was especially concerned about growing communist influence in the region. Therefore, the first ASEAN summit in 1976 constituted the formal basis for building a regional association of states that saw itself primarily as an anti-communist block. Times changed, old enemies became new partners and in the second half of the 1990s, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia joined ASEAN.

However, politically sensitive questions remain, especially when touching upon relations with large neighboring countries. As every country has at least one taboo to safeguard, the member states agreed to the principle of non-interference and in 2007 signed the ASEAN charter, which includes this principle. This attempt to keep neutrality above all aims to protect economic cooperation.

In 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) came to life. During its implementation, it has been facing a number of difficulties. However, the establishment of the AEC shows the importance with which the economic interests of the Southeast Asian nations are being treated. This single market aims to eradicate borders in the economic sphere.

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

But which role does social and ecological justice play? How does ASEAN react to the current geopolitical situation, in which the climate crisis poses the biggest threat and must be tackled through joint efforts? Countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam are highly vulnerable to climate change and feel the consequences already today. Is ASEAN able to react to the social and ecological challenges by taking the interest of its people into account?

This dossier analyzes the institutions of ASEAN - their history, dynamics and policies - with perspectives from authors in academia and civil society who contribute their experience and knowledge.

Truong-Minh Vu describes the context of global power politics in which ASEAN has had to situate itself. Between the interest of their direct neighbor China and the former Western protective power the United States, member states are seeking ties in different directions.

Consequently, ASEAN faces a foreign policy dilemma, which should trigger a revision of the principle of consensus and lead to the acceptance of different opinions instead of paralyzing the community.

Farish A. Noor describes what ASEAN is – besides being an institution - for the people on the ground and to what degree a common identity is organic or merely constructed. Aside from the diversity in Southeast Asia, he sees connecting characteristics that are not only rooted in the young generation in urban centers that are well connected by smartphones and planes, but go back to hundreds of years of common history that have generated major impulses from the peripheries of the nation-states.

NO CONNECTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENTS ON AN ASEAN LEVEL

One common characteristic of the member states today is state repression as Khoo Ying Hooi points out, using the example of the Malaysian Bersih movement. Despite meaningful movements on the national level, such as Bersih, that create strong political reactions, civil society has not managed to connect well-enough on an ASEAN level in order to influence ASEAN decision-making, argues Eduardo C. Tadem.

The focus on purely national cooperation of civil society organizations should be left behind in order to achieve a genuine regional integration and effectively fight shrinking civic spaces and the neoliberal mindset of “profit before people”.

There are numerous groups across borders that feel the consequences of shrinking spaces. Hendri Yulius raises the situation of the LGBTI community and shows how positive developments in the region, such as in Vietnam, stand in contrast to negative examples as repression and oppression in Indonesia. However, this issue is not one of moralizing the sexual behaviour of individuals by states; it is a national response to a global process in which ASEAN could act as a deescalating platform for debate, but it does not take up this role.

One more social group for whom ASEAN’s promise to be “people-centred” is far from any reality is forced migrants. Due to flows within, and also influx from the outside, people are forced, to flee their home for different reasons, as political persecution or economic situation and seek new lives elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Andika Ab. Wahab describes in his article, how Southeast Asia can learn from its own history about how to accept forced migrants and offer them an opportunity to take their futures into their own hands and shape lives of dignity.

Following a phase of industrialization of agriculture in Southeast Asia, the

issue of food security is being raised in different parts of the population. This not only refers to a sufficient food supply for everyone but also clean and safe food. Judith Bopp sheds light on initiatives and policies already existing in different countries to help establish organic food production.

RENEWABLE ENERGIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The question of energy supply is also a question that connects social and health concerns with climate politics in the process of regional integration. Khuong Minh Phuong analyzes the development of renewable energies in Southeast Asia and points out that potential solar, wind, and biomass sources offer alternatives to coal. Renewables can improve air quality, decentralize the energy supply, and reduce CO2 emissions.

It is, above all, socially marginalized groups who feel the ecological consequences of unregulated economic growth and profit-orientation. The podcasts related to this dossier show, how large-scale agriculture and industry development projects destroy the environment, and therefore the livelihoods of people.

One example of this is the long-lasting fires in the region, known as Haze. These fires release huge amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere and harm the health of the affected people. Developments such as this are generated from an ideology of growth and consumption that cannot be hidden by dropping the term “sustainable” as is often done in ASEAN institutions.

This dossier only consists of spotlights on debates that are much broader than what can be shown here. We hope that the articles serve as impulses to develop a deeper understanding of, and interest in, the diverse and politically important region that is Southeast Asia, also beyond the celebration of 50 years of ASEAN – as we are still waiting for social and ecological justice.



Mother and Children cruising through Mahakam River, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

CREATOR: FARISH A. NOOR.

ASEAN IDENTITY, NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE: THE INTERACTION ACROSS BORDERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia should not merely be perceived as geographic definition or as a political ASEAN bloc. It rather is a patchwork of networks, life-worlds, trading systems and cross-cultural pathways of human interaction. These interactions are not new in times of low-cost flights and Facebook but have always existed in different shapes, as a look to the rural borderlands shows.

by Farish A. Noor

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of ASEAN, and weigh its achievements – of which I believe there are many – the question arises as to whether a sense of common ASEAN identity will emerge among the citizens of the respective nation-states of Southeast Asia.

We need to remember that ASEAN was initially put together by the governments of the region as a means to ensure that the countries of ASEAN would not be dragged into the conflict of the Cold War, and that ASEAN was never intended to become a supra-state entity that compromises the sovereignty of its member-states in any way; and that when ASEAN was first conceived in 1967 there was no intention to create anything that resembled a common market with a common currency, or a common citizenship for all the people who live in the region. Being a modest project from the outset, its achievements need to be measured accordingly.

Yet half a century on, we can see positive signs of a growing pan-ASEAN integration taking place. Increasingly, the member states of ASEAN see the need to increase trade with each other, and other advances in communications and logistics have made mobility for ASEAN citizens a reality. Intra-ASEAN tourism, travel and migration has risen, and we now see the phenomenon of the “ASEAN backpacker” emerging, as more and more young ASEAN citizens visit each other’s countries and grow more accommodating of cultural differences.

In some instances, we see tangible results in terms of bridge-building, such as the Malaysian-Singaporean high-speed rail link project. This project will conflate time and space between the two countries, lowering, as opposed to raising border distinctions between them.

The fact that such a project is taking place now, at a time when hyper-nationalism seems to be on the rise in other parts of the world, and when nations are closing, rather than opening their borders, is hugely significant. This points to the fact that the ASEAN region remains one of the most stable in the world, where states have played a crucial role in bringing communities together.

BEFORE BORDERS: OUR COMMON ROOTS

Positive as these developments may be, they are not entirely novel. Historians of ancient Southeast Asian history will point out that the present-day borders of Southeast Asia are obviously relatively new, and were more or less fixed by the 19th century as a result of Asia's contact with colonising Western powers. Yet if we were to turn the clock back by about 30,000 years, we would have a completely different picture of what the region once looked like.

For a start, 30,000 years ago, sea levels were much lower than they are today by around 150 meters. This basically meant that much of what we now call the territory of the South China Sea was in fact dry land, and the region of maritime Southeast Asia was in fact an extended land mass where rudimentary agrarian communities lived.

This was the era of the great movement and settlement of the Austronesian peoples, who are the distant ancestors of us Southeast Asians today; and the movement and migration of the Austronesians extended all the way from present-day Taiwan to all of maritime Southeast Asia, all the way to present-day Nias, Nusa Tenggara, Timor and Papua.

It is here, in our common history that predates the earliest recorded polities of the region, that we see the human connections that bind us. The Austronesians were not a singular ethnic group with a common culture per se, but rather a community that shared a common language-system (Austronesian), and linguistic historians will point out that many of the languages from the most distant parts of Southeast Asia still retain their Austronesian roots until now.

It was only much later, as sea levels began to rise, that the South China Sea emerged, and the Austronesians were dispersed to the highlands which today make up the land masses of the component societies of Southeast Asia. Though these early communities later evolved to become polities, then nation-states, the legacy of movement, settlement and cross-cultural sharing across Southeast Asia has remained a daily reality at the ground level up until the present day.

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

To what extent do the present day member states of ASEAN take into account these historical factors and daily realities on the ground? A quick look at the history textbooks that are used in the countries of the region will give us an idea of the extent to which our historical inter-connectedness has not been studied seriously.

Few official versions of history mention the fact that the communities and nations of Southeast Asia share commonalities in terms of language, culture, beliefs and values. Almost all of the history textbooks in the region begin with the nation-state as the primary actor in history, and in doing so, neglect the centuries of fluid movement and inter-cultural exchange that were once the norms by which Southeast Asians lived.

To compound matters further, it can be noted that all of the states of Southeast Asia today take their political borders as a given political reality, but fail to note that these borders were themselves introduced by colonial powers that emanated from Europe, and were imposed on Southeast Asians by force during the colonial era.

The treaties that were signed by the Western colonial powers, such as the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, effectively imposed boundaries and hindrances upon Southeast Asians who had previously travelled freely in their own region, and did not necessarily see themselves as distinct nations that were exclusive and different from others.

The impact of colonialism on Southeast Asia was disruptive in the sense that it brought to an end a polycentred fluid and mobile world where cultural exchange and cultural borrowing was normal and commonplace, and instead laid the framework for exclusive forms of national-identity that were, and remain, oppositional in nature.

BETWEEN ASEAN'S POWER-CENTRES AND THE PERIPHERY

Analysts often speak and write about the increased mobility that we see across Southeast Asia today, though much of what has been written thus far focuses on modes of travel and communication that are conventional. Up until the 19th century, Southeast Asia's port cities were truly cosmopolitan hubs for commerce, migration and movement, and many of these port cities were also centres for the dissemination of news and political thought.

It is not a coincidence that cities such as Penang, Medan, Batavia (Jakarta), Singapore, Manila, Surabaya, Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), etc. were places where communities came together and also were centres for vernacular publishing.

Today, however, we live in an age of airline travel, and the major conduits and vectors for airline transport are the capital cities and cities with airports. This has created new pathways and networks of mobility, and has shifted our focus from sea to land. It is also not a coincidence that most of the major cities with international airports also happen to be the centres of political and economic power for many ASEAN countries.

This has led some observers to the conclusion that the capitals and megacities of Southeast Asia are the real centres of cosmopolitanism and pluralism today, while the countryside is seen and cast as the rural interior that is more static, slower in development and more homogeneous in its social composition. A clear divide between the "cosmopolitan centre" and the "homogeneous periphery" has been introduced, though I would argue that such a divide is basically a construct, and that it is actually false.

THE MODALITIES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE ALONG THE BORDER REGIONS

I write as a scholar whose work has often taken me to the border zones of Southeast Asia, and I have studied the modalities of economic and socio-cultural life along the border regions of the area. The observations that I have made from these encounters are the following:

That the borders of Southeast Asia are indeed porous, and that despite all attempts to close and police these borders, cross-border movement in many parts of Southeast Asia is a casual, daily reality. Though border-lines may exist on maps, people in real-life situations do live and think according to maps as they have 'mental maps' of their own.

Secondly, the people who inhabit these border zones often have more affinity with their political neighbours than they do with their fellow citizens in other parts of the country. This is simply because the person or persons who live on the other side of that border may well be your friend, commercial partner, relative or even spouse. Such links are familial, organic and thus real.

Thirdly, border-zone communities often do not have nationalist leanings that are exclusive and/or hostile to the 'other'. Narrowly defined nationalist discourses have less meaning and currency among people who live in such border zones for the simple reason that the so-called 'foreign other' is literally next door, standing in front of them, and happen to be the people they trade with, interact with and are married to.

Fourthly – and perhaps most importantly – these ground-level experiences are grounded on ground-level realities of trade, settlement, migration and marriages. And because they are grounded on socio-economic realities they also have meaning for the people whose lives are shaped by those realities.

A bottom-up, organic approach to a study of ASEAN should look at these sub-regional border zone domains as human habitus in their own right, and take as its starting point the meaning of "home" and "the local" to these communities. Official histories may have some difficulty in dealing with such local, sub-regional conceptions of homeland and belongings, for they may appear to contradict the official state-centric discourse of governance or official national histories which tend to be linear and totalising.

What this means is that we could and perhaps should be studying Southeast Asia not as a pre-defined geographical bloc or area, and not as a region defined solely by ASEAN, but rather as a patchwork of networks, life-worlds, trading systems and pathways of human contact.

RESEARCH ON BORDER ZONES

Many scholars have already shifted the focus of their research to such border zones, at a time when Area Studies as a discipline is also undergoing serious internal critique and assessment. Many scholars such as myself now feel that the study of Southeast Asia cannot and should not be confined solely to the study of political states and the workings of power at the centre, but also must look at the real-life ground level realities in the periphery zones where all kinds of interesting human relations and interactions are taking place.

Once outside the central zone of the political centres of ASEAN, we can see that the ways local people imagine their own geography, their sense of sub-regional belonging, their understanding of their neighbouring communities, etc. are all very different from the official narratives that emanate from the centres of power.

This does not negate the importance of the capital as the centre of power, but it does render our understanding of ASEAN as more complex. Further, it shows that there is not really a singular ASEAN to speak of, but rather, many local and grounded understandings of ASEAN that are shared between different communities.

As ASEAN looks to the future and plans its development ahead, it needs to be cognisant of these realities on the ground, and aware of the fact that on an ordinary, mundane level, citizens of ASEAN do have multiple, and sometimes overlapping understandings of what and who they are.

It is indeed the case that ASEAN citizens are travelling more and more across the region, and in time, a sense of common belonging (though not citizenship) may emerge as a result of that. However, this is not a sense of belonging that oversimplifies and homogenises all ASEAN citizens into one solid mass, but rather as a patchwork of communities that are closely bound by shared history, geographical proximity, and shared interests.

For the sake of ASEAN's future cohesion in the future, as the region enters a period of history marked by uncertainty and great insecurity, these ground-level social bonds that have developed along the border zones of ASEAN need to be appreciated and understood, for they may well provide the psycho-social sinews that will keep Southeast Asia together in an era of global crisis and division.

ASEAN AMONG GREAT POWERS

As a direct neighbor of China and with various important maritime routes, ASEAN sees itself facing a difficult geopolitical situation. Member states are divided on the question of partnership with the US and China. Competing trade agreements and planned infrastructure investments are dilemmas that ASEAN can only successfully solve if they approach the challenges as group that lets go of its consensus decision-making and allows for countries' flexible participation.

by Truong-Minh Vu



China's increasing presence, from economic to military links, is leading to a potential emergence of Chinese spheres of influence in which Southeast Asia will be regarded as China's backyard. To many observers, China's regional leadership constitutes an irresistible outcome of China's remarkable economic performances and influence.

Fairbank's well-known concept of the Chinese world order provides a model to understand international relations in Asia, which constructs China in the role of centrality and superiority in the system^[1]. Those who place emphasis on the long history of hierarchical order in Asia tend to endorse the fact that the Middle Kingdom has returned to the center as the most dominant power and regional leader. It is no longer a contested claim.

With China tightening its grip on much of the South China Sea, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is struggling to adopt an appropriate and unified response. Southeast Asian countries have not only denied or unofficially accepted Chinese leadership, but have also called for other outside powers or partners not directly involved in the disputed issues (e.g. territory or sea disputes between China and Southeast Asian countries) to take a leading role.

Although the strategic options of smaller powers are limited, ASEAN's strategies towards great powers show that smaller powers still have a diverse menu of strategic options to choose from, depending on which is most effective in meeting its short- and long-term needs.

HOW TRADE WILL SHAPE THE REGIONAL ORDER

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is considered as one of the most important pillars of US' rebalance move towards Asia, a strategy shift developed under the Obama administration. This strategy was formed in light of China's increasing rise to power, consequently threatening the regional distribution of power in the US' favor.

Admittedly, China is not ready to upset the Bretton Wood system anytime soon, yet it has more than once demonstrated its revisionist ambition in the region. For instance, Xi Jinping has called for a new regional security order without alliances, to be decided by Asian nations among themselves^[2].

This makes China a unprecedented challenge for the US: a geopolitical rival committed to confront American unipolarity, while remaining deeply integrated with Washington and its allies economically.

This makes trade a sensible approach in the US' strategic goals in the region. US interests are also aligned with small yet strategically crucial TPP states in Southeast Asia, whose relations with China are of an intricate nature. The TPP, in this sense, is expected to give these states choices rather than economic dependence on China, which would potentially lead to weakened diplomatic and political leverage over Beijing.

In short, TPP reflects US strategic implications before China's increasing rise to power in the region, and it is expected to be a policy tool in shaping practices in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Even with TPP potentially facing its demise after US withdrawal, such strategic concerns still exist.

THE ROLE OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

China certainly understands US targets, and has come up with its own response: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)^[3]. On its face, the RCEP's primary goal is to solve the "spaghetti bowl" issue by combining the existing five ASEAN-plus FTAs into a single agreement. Considered a direct answer to TPP, however, the RCEP is much less ambitious in its scope and commitments.

The key focus is on trade in goods, instead of various thorny non-trade issues included in TPP such as intellectual property, labor and environment codes, and government procurement. The RCEP, much like the TPP negotiation rounds, is progressing slowly, and its low quality starting point risks locking the region into a pattern of low quality FTAs, which may prove hard to break in the future. Regardless, RCEP is still a required trade deal to secure Beijing's central role in the region economically.

These two mega-regional trade agreements have posed a problem for countries in the region although some belong to both. As previously discussed,

these two trade deals are technically different in terms of their level of commitment, and therefore are irreconcilable.

Moreover, the geopolitical undertone of the China-US rivalry, while implicit, is apparent, and most parties in the region are arguably pursuing a sophisticated strategy of balance between the two giants. The sudden breakdown of TPP is thus creating a vacuum in which the balance of influence is tilting towards China. This is especially true for ASEAN countries.

As the Trump administration has pulled the US out of TPP, Vietnam, for example, must look elsewhere. Partners of both the RCEP and Vietnam-EU Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), which include E.U. countries, India and Japan, are complementary economies to the Vietnamese market.

Although the strategic and institutional gains Vietnam hopes to reap from these two are incomparable with those of the TPP, a change of direction is still necessary. Vietnam's TPP deals with the US already serving as a considerably advantageous foundation compared to other Asian partners.

Thorny issues, such as labor union, and government procurement, have led to both parties being able to achieve a common ground. It must be emphasized that it is not tariff abolition, but non-tariff standards which have brought Vietnam and the US into an agreement of great significance. Standards concerning labor, the production chain and others, while difficult to meet, may facilitate an immense stream of US investment into Vietnam's service and manufacturing sectors once Vietnam manages to achieve.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Having good relations with this moderate grouping ASEAN could help to enhance the relationship between China and individual ASEAN member states. China hopes to use new ideas and projects as main instruments to ensure survival and expand power in an environment of ever-changing security.

For instance, since the announcement of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) project, there have been many different ideas suggesting a connection between the MSR and Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025). Located in the upper part of the China's MSR, ASEAN Ports Network (APN) proposes to connect 47 ports of ASEAN countries.

Expectations surrounding Beijing's investments in the ASEAN ports network might have financial ground that OBOR could be another financial source of ASEAN connectivity plan. In addition, for China the whole OBOR initiative is also a potential solution to solve the industrial overcapacity problem in the country.

However, there is still a lacking of strategic understanding of the MSR, due to the fact that China has its own calculations concerning connecting infrastructures.

There are two relatively consistent principles of Beijing's infrastructure politics. First and foremost, it is to create a general connection between different kinds of infrastructures, including roads, railways, ports, waterways, even manufacture zones, logistic zones and storage zones of Chinese enterprises in the region. Similar models have been carried out in Africa, and most recently, the proposal "East Coastal Rail Line" in Malaysia.

According to a report from the Strait Times, the construction of new roads and flyovers from the port complex to a nearby industrial park is almost complete, and the East Coast Rail Line project (ECRL) will connect ports on the east and west coasts of Peninsular Malaysia to Kuantan Port^[4].

The second principle is creating a parallel version to avoid the main route through the Straits of Malacca. Currently, China has up to 29 of 39 marine routes, around 60 percent of exported and imported goods, and 80 percent of imported oil going through this strait. Leaders of Beijing for long have talked about security "dilemma" – describing Malacca as a "knot at the top of a neck" without any easy solution.

From this point of view, China would not want either the roadways or the waterways they build to lead to ports around the South China Sea, but to link to the Straits of Malacca. Instead, China is making efforts to build alternative routes to connect to the South Asia – Indian Ocean region.

A NEW RAILWAY ROUTE

Since 2010, along with promoting two railway routes in Thailand and Laos (which did not start until the end of 2015), China also declared its intentions to build a railway route connecting the country to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar. The intended railway route, called Kyaukphyu – Kunming would cost 20 billion US dollar.

The purpose would be to transport oil, gas and goods from Kyaukphyu Port to Kunming and back.^[5] This route would be connected via the Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM) and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This would give China three alternative routes to the Straits of Malacca. These three routes would not only be the shorter but also much safer for China.

Connected infrastructures can be regarded as a tool of power. Dominant powers can reshape regional infrastructures in various ways. The tumultuous history of these infrastructures clearly shows how much imperial designs are based on material underpinnings, lending credibility to the assumed links between order and large technical systems, such as artificial canals, ports, roads and railways.

The importance of the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal are sometimes

alluded to, as they serve as transportation hubs for hegemonic power projection of Great Britain and the US.

ASEAN, on the other hand, has different expectations when it comes to the major transportation connectivity plans between the regional grouping and China. Despite the fact that ASEAN has the same goals as China's OBOR (One Belt, One Road) Initiative, ASEAN's infrastructure systems – in Beijing's view – do not have strategic correlation.

On the other hand, new infrastructural connections (which might be more China-centered) might pose a challenge to ASEAN connectivity. By using the strategy of "breaking each chopstick", each ASEAN country would feel the push force to connect with China.

BRINGING "ASEAN CENTRALITY" BACK IN

Since the end of the Cold War, regional multilateralism with ASEAN at its core has been institutionalized by bureaucratic protocols, which often lead to stagnation in decision-making process. All of the actors have always been diplomatically neutral in their engagement with others, trying to stay away from any political intricacy and conflicts.

The "ASEAN way", in which member states have tacitly adhered to many implicit diplomatic protocols and the famous non-interference principle, was proven to be effective on the economic front in the early decades following the birth of the organization.

ASEAN has shown on many occasions that in order to be regarded as a central role in regional political structure, there is still much work to be done. Multilateral arrangements with ASEAN at a central figure, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or the East Asia Summit (EAS), are still playing minor roles in the region's political and security arenas.

It is better, of course, for regional leaders to set up forums and communicate with each other. Nevertheless, after two decades of multilateralism, regional security is still facing more challenges than ever before.

A fundamental problem with ASEAN is a lack of unity in terms of "threat perceptions" vis-à-vis China, however. However, the overwhelming priority for ASEAN is to resolve its own internal disparities, which have restricted the bloc's actions against China as well as its ability to engage other major powers in a peaceful South China Sea dispute settlement.

Last April, at the 30th ASEAN Summit in the Philippines, a joint statement was released without mentioning "land reclamation and militarization" – words that have been used in several recent joint statements by the bloc to express concern among Member States about China's artificial island and its actions in the South China Sea.

Critics were quick to target primarily the Philippines and President Rodrigo Duterte, claiming that the Philippines was deliberately mitigating the South China Sea issue for China's sake. As a consequence, ASEAN has set a low threshold for the next joint statement.

DEVELOPMENT OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

ASEAN countries continue to look forward to the process of developing the Code of Conduct. Indonesia, one of the core members, has opposed the participation of powers, and has also expressed its desire to discuss the joint statements among member states before discussing with China.

The Philippines, which chaired the summit this year, has taken certain steps in China's concessions and has reached a soft approach in speeding up the development of the code. The country has decided neither to mention the award in the arbitration case between the Philippines and China over the South China Sea, nor to discuss China's escalating actions in the meeting.

At the same time, the Philippines will have bilateral talks with China and has also expressed their desire to issue the final draft at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in August in Manila.

Since 2009, the lack of normative order in the South China Sea has been paving the way for legal and academic fireworks. That's why the Award issued by the Tribunal in 2016 has offered a chance for ASEAN as an organization of countries in Southeast Asia and ASEAN member countries to reassess its policy options in order to respond to opportunities and challenges arising in the post-arbitration context. When gathered together, ASEAN remains an important factor.

Maritime Southeast Asian states may also become particularly important in China's implementation of its Maritime Silk Road strategy. ASEAN could use this strategy as leverage to expand its agendas in shaping the engagement of both Beijing and Washington, thereby promoting its own regional integration programs as well as other economic and security interests.

It is also a time for Vietnam to boost its relationships with other regional claimants and encourage ASEAN centrality. The first target should be Philippines-Vietnam-Malaysia-Indonesia strategic cooperation. The broader significance of Philippines-Vietnam-Malaysia-Indonesia partnership, however, lies in how it fits into a broader network of informal alliances on China's periphery.

These four states should develop and adopt a common position on various aspects of the law of the sea in the South China Sea based on the award. For ASEAN, operating in the context of a regional power shift, normative and legal approaches were and will remain the most feasible solution in dealing with stronger nations.

Furthermore, ASEAN must first and foremost decide to share its abundant political burden equally amongst member states and at the same time find ways to diffuse some of its political capital in order to bring about long term stability. A simple step would greatly improve the effectiveness and influence of ASEAN as a regional organization: establishing majority vote mechanism^[6]. Or in a less divisive manner, all essential decisions of the organization should be made on the basis of a two-thirds vote.

A different approach could be resolving the negative effects of decision-making based on consensus. Veto power shall be removed. Institutionalizing the rule of “ASEAN minus (country) X”^[7], a formula for flexible participation instead of consensus mechanism, would be critical for the future of ASEAN as a core of any regional structures.

[1] Fairbank, John (1968), *The Chinese World Order; Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1968).

[2] Xi Jinping, “New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation,” Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, May 21, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml, retrieved May 2, 2017.

[3] The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is currently being negotiated amongst ASEAN countries and six other partner countries (Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, South Korea and India), becomes a possibility where ASEAN central role could be strengthened.

[4] Lopez, L. (2017). “Malaysia's East Coast Rail Line touted as a game changer,” *Strait Times*, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysias-east-coast-rail-line-touted-as-a-game-changer> retrieved May 2, 2017.

[5] <http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/kyaukphyu-kunming-railway-dead-yet-chinese-envoy/>

[6] Manning, R. A. (2016). “Time to rethink ASEAN,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Viewpoints/Robert-A.-Manning-Time-to-rethink-ASEAN> retrieved May 2, 2017.

[7] Tang, S. (2016). “Asean must reassess its ‘one voice’ decision-making,” *TODAY* <http://www.todayonline.com/commentary/asean-must-reassess-itsone-voice-decision-making> retrieved May 2, 2017.



ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People's forum Mobilization in the Street of Manila.

CREATOR: EDUARDO C. TADEM.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WITH ASEAN

So far, the engagement of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum has been disappointing. A new strategy for people-to-people regional integration is needed to achieve genuine connection beyond state agendas and to develop a new narrative and guide to action in the fight for social and ecological justice.

by **Eduardo C. Tadem**

An in-house assessment by the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) concluded that in the ten years of engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) from 2005 to 2015, "individual ASEAN member countries have consistently resisted and vacillated with regards civil society participation and engagement."

The 2016 ACSC/APF Statement further scored the "prevailing silence and lack of attention and response to the observations and recommendations raised in all previous ACSC/APF Statements."

In view of these events, new directions and new modes for civil society engagement with ASEAN are urgently needed. This paper recommends a radical restructuring of civil society engagement with ASEAN in order to organize a people-to-people regional integration process that is independent of the state and the corporate-biased ASEAN model.

CSO CONCERNS

The year 2017 marks the fiftieth year of ASEAN'S founding with the Philippines serving as the host country. For over a decade, civil society organizations (CSOs) and people's organizations across the region have been challenging the regional organization to address issues and concerns that affect the citizens of Southeast Asia.

Among the more prominent CSO concerns are:

1. lack of popular participation in ASEAN decision-making,
2. rising inequalities between and among member countries,
3. weakening democracies and the prevalence of authoritarian governing modes,
4. human rights deficits and the absence of sanctions against rogue regimes,
5. dominance of an elite-centered development strategy and the resulting failure to attain inclusive growth,
6. competition rather than complementarity in trade and investment relations,
7. lack of a regional identity and unity,
8. weak social protection for all residents and migrants and
9. ongoing inequality between genders.

THE ACSC/APF

The main forum for civil society engagement with the ASEAN process is the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF), which was established in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. Its constituents consist of the following groups: workers, the peasantry, urban poor, fisherfolk, women, youth and children, the LGBT community, indigenous peoples, migrants, older persons, employees, professionals, students and persons with disabilities.

Among its thematic priorities are human rights, social protection, foreign policies, trade and investments, labor and migration, social inequality, peace and security, food sovereignty, women, gender and LGBT rights, and climate justice.

Throughout its eleven years of engagement with ASEAN, the ACSC/APF has focused on organizing national consultations and workshops, national and regional meetings with government counterparts, regional consultative meetings, crafting the ACSC/APF annual statement, holding parallel conferences with the ASEAN Summit, mass mobilization (rallies, etc.), and an interface with ASEAN heads of state.

The specific issues and concerns are as follows: inequitable free trade agreements, rampant land conversions and land grabbing, heightened militarization, pollution, disasters, migration, feminization of informal sectors, high-skilled and low-skilled divide among migrant workers, internal conflicts and displacement, absence of a genuine agrarian reform and land deconcentration, agro-ecology, neglect of agriculture, gender inequality and disempowerment of women, lack of universal health care, poor access to education, power and water issues, homophobia and misogyny, trafficking of persons, and marginalization of the informal sector.

RESULTS OF ENGAGEMENT

The question, however, is whether these eleven years of CSO engagement with ASEAN have been fruitful. Tellingly, an internal ACSC/APF Ten-Year Review (2005-2015) concluded that "individual ASEAN member countries have consistently resisted and vacillated with regards civil society participation and engagement" and that "ASEAN and its member governments have been seen to be more comfortable with the private sector and academic and research think tanks than with civil society." As a result, the review further concludes that:

High expectations for people's participation in ASEAN, encouraged by the promise of 'a people-oriented ASEAN' and the hope of approximating established practice at the UN system, are thus not met, leading to frustration amongst those in civil society who have chosen to engage ASEAN at various

levels. Civil society views ASEAN's openness to participation as very crucial. But the level of commitment of ASEAN is perceived to be only on the level of rhetoric, and not as intentional, owing to the fact that enabling environments are not present to facilitate people's participation.

The ACSC/APF 2016 Timor Leste Statement asserted that "ASEAN civil society remains extremely concerned about ASEAN's prevailing silence and lack of attention and response to the observations and recommendations raised in all previous ACSC/APF Statements."

A press release issued by the ACSC/APF Co-Chairs upon the close of the two Laos Summits of Leaders in 2016 expressed "disappointment at the continued lack of opportunity to voice human rights concerns and critically engage with [the] government .. [and of] ASEAN governments' lack of recognition of civil society as a critical stakeholder."

THINKING AND ACTING OUTSIDE THE ASEAN BOX

Given the disappointing results of ten years of engagement with ASEAN utilizing modes as outlined above, what is needed now is a new vision for engagement by civil society in general, and by the ASEAN ACSC/APF in particular for 2017 and beyond. An October 2016 CSO Strategic Workshop in Kuala Lumpur that reviewed the results of the internal ten-year evaluation stressed that "revolutionary ways of engagement will have to be explored and new modalities suggested."

Accordingly, ACSC/APF must now think and act outside the ASEAN box. It must develop strategies of engagement that go beyond mere assertions of its independence and autonomy from state agenda.

It should lead the way and initiate the process of establishing a regional integration model that offers an alternative to the existing ASEAN process, one that is based on people-to-people interactions rather than state-to-state relations or purely market-oriented interactions. This is the way to overcome the frustration and vexation felt by CSOs at the lack of response and action by ASEAN governments towards ACSC/APF concerns.

PREMISES

Above anything else, we need to understand several premises that underpin the need for new directions and new strategies for Southeast Asian civil society groups and movements. The first is to make a distinction between Southeast Asia as a geographic region and its peoples, diverse cultures and histories, on one hand, and ASEAN as a regional organization locked in a market-centered and state-supported process with a particular ideology and strategy of development that marginalizes and disempowers its people.

Secondly, ASEAN's guiding mantra framework of "profits before people" and unbridled economic growth have only further widened the gap between the rich and the poor within and between countries, and have caused unparalleled damage to the environment.

Thirdly, ASEAN's adherence to the 17th century Westphalian state model which emphasizes absolute sovereignty and unrestricted territorial integrity is no longer relevant in the age of 21st century globalization, where porous boundaries and labor migration patterns have created dual and sometimes multiple identities of peoples that transcend ethnic and cultural lines.

Lastly, Southeast Asia is a much greater entity than what ASEAN currently encompasses. Various scholars have argued that the region should not be confined to the ten ASEAN member states nor the existing colonially-determined boundaries, but should include areas in other neighboring countries whose peoples bear similar cultural and ethnic characteristics as those who live in what is normally referred to as Southeast Asia.^[1]

CSOs and people's organizations must, therefore, work beyond the narrow boundaries of nation states, territorial demarcations, and ethnic distinctions.

THE ROAD TO AN ALTERNATIVE REGIONAL INTEGRATION MODEL

As a starting point, there is a need to acknowledge that Southeast Asian residents and communities, for many years and on their own, have been engaged in alternative, heterodox, and non-mainstream practices that encompass economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects.

In some instances, people-to-people relations and networks for various purposes have also been set up. In the economic realm, these consist of people-to-people trade via the media of alter-trade organizations through producer and trading cooperatives with the view of reviving local markets and strengthening cooperation between farmers and consumers. These trading patterns are founded on the principles of fair trade and mutual exchange, and can take the form of counter-trade arrangements such as barter trade.

On the production side, social enterprises, producer cooperatives and communities are engaged in exchange of sustainable food production technology such as organic family farming, agro-ecology, biodiversity, zero-waste production, and indigenous agronomic practices (e.g. seed breeding and production), that are environmentally and people-friendly while promoting productivity.

In the power sector, bright prospects also exist for community-based renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, and biogas technologies. For housing, vernacular architecture forms utilizing indigenous forms and locally-sourced materials also exist.

POLITICAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Politically, informal and formal networks of civil society organizations and social movements have been operating for decades on issues related to environmental issues, women's rights, workers' and human rights, human security, and many other concerns.^[2] Joint political advocacies for peasants' rights, and their corresponding actions have been undertaken via mass mobilization during international gatherings as well as lobbying with states and multilateral organizations.

Communities have engaged in local planning and practiced conflict settlement mechanisms. Social media has also been utilized extensively. It must be admitted, however, that these political practices have yet to fully come together and gel into a form of regional solidarity that sets aside national interests in favor of regional and international unities.

On the cultural side, visual artists and other performers have been networking through regional events that showcase the richness, diversity, and historical depth of Southeast Asia's creative arts. More significant, political and economic issues that are concerns of civil society groups are also highlighted and represented via these cultural interactions and presentations.

While it has often lagged behind other aspects of society, culture is essential in lending a human and spiritual face to political and economic dimensions, and should therefore be nurtured and developed. In the social aspect, self-help groups have long existed and local networks have coordinated and shared their social protection activities on alternative health and education practices.

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENTS

If the above initiatives are already in effect, what would be the role of civil society and movement-based networks like ACSC/APF? The answer to this question lies in looking at what these popular initiatives lack or are deficient in. First, they are still largely disparate and somewhat disconnected.

Many local and national groups are unaware of similar developments in neighboring societies, or if aware, are unable to reach out and connect with other groups and programs. Regional solidarity is based on groups and actions in countries being able to know each other, exchange information and knowledge, enhance their capabilities and expertise, and work together. This is a networking gap that needs to be strengthened and filled.

Secondly, research and documentation and constant monitoring of these popular initiatives are also lacking. This is important in order to build a database of practices, examine each one, identify the best and model features, and point out the inadequacies and deficits. Thorough research and meticulous documentation are skills that grassroots organizations and practitioners pay less attention to.

RESEARCH STUDIES AS SUPPORT FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

This is understandable, as their lives are taken up by the day-to-day demands of organizing, mobilizing of resources, and production. Research studies of this type will provide the service needed by grassroots organizations in order to further develop and scale-up their pioneering activities. This is the second gap that needs to be filled.

Thirdly, these practices are generally viewed as marginal and confined to an insignificant section of society, some even being dubbed as “elitist.” At best, they remain at the pioneering stage with scarce attempts to scale up and advance to higher levels. Some of them eventually fold up and cease operations.

The task, therefore, is to mainstream these innovative practices in order to challenge and eventually supplant the orthodox models of production, marketing, and distribution. To do so requires the coming and working together of grassroots organizations, local communities, civil society groups, and social movements in massive information and advocacy campaigns. This is the third gap to be filled.

Fourthly, and probably most important of all, is making sense of everything that is taking place. Popular practices constitute a rich trove of empirical data that needs to be distilled, subjected to the rigorous test of comparisons, and finally, conceptualized and developed into a paradigm, a narrative, a framework, a theory, and a guide to action.

This is a reflexive process, one that is continuous and never-ending. As human actions continually evolve and change and new practices emerge, so too must our concepts, perspectives, and philosophies change and evolve. This is the fourth and most crucial gap that needs to be filled.

BUILDING AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In building an alternative model of regional integration, the ACSC/APF should take on a prominent role in filling these four gaps and any others that may arise and require regional intervention. By doing so, it will provide an alternative model of regional integration and civil solidarity that transcends boundaries, borders, and nationalities. It can achieve this by undertaking the following activities:

1. Coordinating the interaction between alternative practices;
2. Convening and organizing conferences and workshops of the groups and communities involved in alternative practices;
3. Researching and documenting the practices and building a database;
4. Conducting alternative learning and training programs based on grassroots organizations' needs;
5. Conceptualizing and making sense of the practices and developing new paradigms and strategies of development;
6. Mobilizing the entire universe of alternative practices, regional interactions and the communities, and organizing joint actions and initiatives;
7. Promoting the replication of the alternative practices in order to mainstream them;
8. Establishing a regional mechanism at the civil society level that is based on the interactions and cooperative practices between these alternative practices; and,
9. Establishing alternative regional structures that are decentralized and creative, where different tasks and responsibilities are distributed throughout the region and rotated regularly.
10. The above strategy for a people-to-people regional integration does not preclude the continuation of engaging the official ASEAN process as before. This traditional form can continue in order to win concessions on specific issues and concerns and extend support for reform-minded government officials and personnel. It will, however, no longer be the main focus of ACSC/APF as it makes use of its regional network's members to work for a new integration of Southeast Asian civil society from the ground up.

CONCLUSION

The eleven-year experience of engagement with the official ASEAN process has taught civil society movements in Southeast Asia valuable lessons that should guide its future trajectories. Disappointment, rejection, and disillusionment should now be a thing of the past and chalked up to experience. The real challenge facing ACSC/APF today lies from outside and beyond the established ASEAN process.

ACSC/APF must firm up and tighten its links and interconnections with grassroots initiatives, and the creative practices of real people struggling to carve a better and more dignified life for their families and communities.

Admittedly, this will prove to be a long and difficult process and can only be implemented over the course of many years of hard work and dedicated commitment. But there is no alternative. ACSC/APF has to take up this challenge or continue to be mired in the old ways that have proven to be ineffective and counterproductive.

[1] This is in reference to the eight Northeast Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura and the Southwest Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and parts of Sichuan.

[2] Specific concerns include free trade agreements, land conversions and land grabbing, militarization, pollution, climate change, disasters, migration, feminization of the informal sector, the divide between high-skilled and low-skilled workers among migrants, internal conflicts and displacement, genuine agrarian reform, food sovereignty, agro-ecology, neglect of agriculture, gender equality and women's empowerment, universal health care, access to education, power and water issues, homophobia and misogyny, trafficking, the informal sector, etc.



ASEAN Flag and Rainbow Flag: Pursuing Rights in ASEAN.

CREATOR: FRANSISKUS TARMEDI.

GLOBAL LGBT RIGHTS AND THE RISE OF ANTI-LGBT RHETORIC IN INDONESIA

The public discourse in Indonesia has turned against LGBT people. This is also due to positive developments in other ASEAN countries as it puts the issue on the political agenda and in the public debate. People now perceive LGBTI as new intrusion and are not able not differentiate between different groups within the term LGBT although some of them, as the waria community, have been a part of Indonesian society for a long time already. However, behind closed doors, the Indonesian government still supports projects for LGBTI groups.

by **Hendri Yulius**

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (henceforth LGBT) issues have become a source of great divide among nations and countries. While a number of Western countries such as The Netherlands, Canada, and Spain, to name a few, have recognized same-sex marriage, several other countries have also made legal steps to acknowledge the non-binary gender category that is often dubbed as the “third gender”. In addition, there have been a series of actions to recognize, establish, and mainstream human rights standards to protect LGBT people. In 2006, a meeting for international human rights in Yogyakarta, Indonesia resulted in the creation of the Yogyakarta Principles which became a major legal instrument for LGBT movements. A similar historical move was then also followed by the United Nations in mandating the appointment of an independent expert on sexual orientation and gender identity.

These developments have further helped to spread the globalization of discourse on LGBT rights into many parts of the world, including the Southeast Asia region. Two years ago, Vietnam finally lifted the ban on same-sex marriage, allowing many same-sex couples to plan for wedding ceremonies^[1]. By the end of last year, the LGBT anti-discrimination bill reached the Philippines’ Senate plenary for the very first time in 17 years^[2]. This historic victory has given hope to the LGBT community, in light of the high transgender murder rate in the country. Similarly, in Bangkok, where transgender individuals are highly visible, PC Air - a Thai airline has been recruiting transgender flight attendants since 2012^[3]. Despite progress, some reports still reveal that stigma, discrimination, and bullying against LGBT individuals in those countries remain rampant^[4].

In 2015, the US Supreme Court ruling on marriage equality and emphasis on marriage rights also seemingly increased LGBT rights discourse at the international level. This has unfortunately become a basis for apprehension and conservative backlash in many parts of the world^[5]. LGBT activism in Indonesia, for example, is has increasingly become associated with efforts to legalize same-sex marriage, which has also led the government to announce publicly that there is no such place for LGBT movements in the country. Equally as frightening, increasing visibility of LGBT issues also prompted Brunei Darussalam to adopt sharia law, which views homosexual practices as an act punishable by death by stoning. Section 377A of the British legacy Penal Code that outlaws “unnatural sex acts” in neoliberal Singapore also still remains in effect.

Having considered different responses toward LGBT issues in Southeast Asian countries, I have selected a predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia, as a departure point to explore how the internationalization of LGBT rights discourse generates national homophobia, which subsequently reveals its complexities and incongruities.

THE RISE AND FALL OF LGBT ISSUES IN INDONESIA

It is abundantly clear that 2016 was a significant touchstone for LGBT Indonesians. While negative sentiment toward LGBT people from the state and religious fundamentalists has been intermittent over the past few decades, these attitudes have started to transform into a series of public denouncements since last year.

Ministers, public officials, religious organizations, and even some civil society organization representatives have made generalized and derogatory statements in public, criticizing efforts to legalize same-sex marriage and associating homosexuality with pedophilia, mental illness, and sinful and contagious behavior^[6]. As a consequence, the government also requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international humanitarian organizations to stop channeling financial and technical support to local LGBT organizations.

Despite the fact that media uproar surrounding LGBT issues at the national level subsided in mid-2016, an Islamic pro-family group continues to take legal steps to outlaw homosexuality in the country. Mostly consisting of women positioning themselves as “mothers”, the Family Love Alliance [*Aliansi Cinta Keluarga/ ALA*] argues that “LGBT behavior” would imperil children and the young generation; homosexuality is contagious through pleasure derived from anal sex, and same-sex marriage would subsequently increase the incidence and spread of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and anal cancer. The association of LGBT people with the legalization of same-sex marriage is also widespread in the anti-LGBT rhetoric^[7].

Having gone through this anti-LGBT vitriol, what I found incredibly fascinating was that the anti-LGBT groups inadvertently promoted and mainstreamed the term LGBT and increased its use in public last year, despite misconceptions that surrounded the term^[8]. Previously, the term LGBT was only circulated among activist networks or people who were familiar with gender and sexuality issues. Besides, it was commonly circulated in urban middle-class spaces. Recently, I was surprised when some people addressed me as “LGBT” instead of “gay”, noticing that the term nowadays does not seem to be perceived as an acronym of a variety of sexual and/or gender identities. It rather becomes a single category to address people with non-normative genders and sexualities^[9].



A protester in Jakarta holding a signboard. Despite recent crackdowns in Indonesia, the LGBT community in Indonesia has steadily become more visible and politically active.

CREATOR: HENDRI YULIUS.

More interestingly, the absence of the terminology in state policies—the Pornography Bill and the 2012 Ministry of Social Affairs’ classification of minority groups, to name a few—signaled the government’s unfamiliarity with sexual and gender labels. However, the unexpected popularization of the term LGBT in the country has further escalated its use in state discourse. The 2016 Ministry of Youth and Sports’ Creative Youth Ambassador Selection required participants to submit a medical certificate demonstrating that they were not involved in “LGBT behavior”.

Before the use of LGBT, Indonesians with non-normative genders and sexualities identified themselves as “gay”, “lesbi” (derogatory term for lesbian), “tomboy”, and “waria” (which is inadequately translated as transgender woman). These terms have been used mainly since the late 1970s, and there were in fact a number of gay and lesbian organizations during that period. However, human rights language was barely used. Rather, their practices formed something which I would call cultural activism—spreading awareness that homosexuality is normal through publications and dialogues, and forming networks of homosexuals throughout the archipelago.

Self-acceptance was still a major concern for activists. This was partially due to the fact that the discourse of LGBT rights was not yet widespread, and Indonesian society was still grounded on strong filial relations— individuality was immoral and against societal norms^[10]. The heterosexual and reproductive family principle strongly bound the state. Many gay Indonesians even married people of the opposite sex, since they perceived their sexuality as “abnormal”, “an illness”, and “against family norms”. There was no effort to defend the rights of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression^[11]. Such discourse was still far-off.

When HIV/AIDS and reproductive health became a concern in Indonesia, gay activists also used public health issues as a vehicle to reach out to their peers and sensitize them to sexual health related information and self-acceptance. There was a natural convergence of sexual and reproductive health advocates and the movements for gay and lesbian acceptance. The growing concern about HIV gave gay groups access to a strategic channel and financial support for strengthening self-worth and instilling confidence in gay men. Further, gay and lesbian activists began to formally include waria into their activism in 1994 as one of the resolutions from the first congress of Indonesian gay and lesbian activists.

The collapse of the authoritarian regime in 1998 has led Indonesia towards democratization. These moves towards democracy have successfully led to the proliferation of human rights concerns to amend the state violations in the past. Freedom of expression and media have begun to be legally protected and guaranteed. Human rights discourse and activism have flourished, with transnational connections and financial support from LGBT, HIV and sexual health and humanitarian/human rights organizations helping to mushroom LGBT organizations. This has further helped to increase use of the term LGBT and human rights rhetoric in their movements. The influx of foreign assistance and interactions with transnational LGBT movements enables the flow of Westernized knowledge on gender and sexuality into the local landscape. As a consequence, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) is increasingly being perceived as an innate feature of the individual.

This shift has gradually been transforming the local understanding of sexuality. While in the past, sexual orientation was placed before family and nation, it has increasingly been treated as a crucial part of the individual that needs to be accepted. Opponents of LGBT rights often argue that not criminalizing LGBT sexuality would be a threat to the family principle. Aside from the family principle, LGBT has also been recognized as a serious threat to traditional gender norms.

Simultaneously, democratization was unpredictably providing a fertile ground for previously suppressed Islamic politics to burgeon, shown through the rise of religious conservatism in political landscapes^[12]. The conservatives used decentralization in several provinces to enact sharia-based by-laws or local ordinances that police non-normative sexualities, including prostitution and homosexuality. What is intriguing about these bylaws is

that they conflate homosexuality with prostitution and confuse gay/homosexual identity with same-sex practices^[13]. Moreover, other bylaws at provincial levels police individuals with non-normative genders and sexualities on the basis of being a “public nuisance”^[14].

Juggling through this mishmash, I see that these laws are practically difficult to implement and not always applicable to every LGBT Indonesian. Many *warias*, due to limited access to employment, work as street musicians and/or sex workers; they are the ones who are more visible and easily become the target of these bylaws as a “public nuisance”, alongside homosexuals who cannot afford private spaces, and homosexual sex workers. Class and economic power thus inevitably complicate the vulnerability of LGBT Indonesians.

Religious conservatism, coupled with the government’s inaction to control religious vigilantes, have led to a number of violations in civil private spheres. Increased visibility and the mushrooming of LGBT organizations after the collapse of New Order also provoked counter-movements from the conservatives. Religious vigilante groups, particularly the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), have been the main perpetrators of raids and attacks at queer-related activities and events. The activists thus consolidated their organizations for the very first time at Indonesia’s LGBTIQ Forum [*Forum LGBTIQ Indonesia*] in 2010, not so long after the raid against the first International Lesbian and Gay association (ILGA) Conference in Surabaya. In order to avoid potential raids, the activists avoided using the term LGBT publicly, distributing information through limited communication channels, removing any attributes that might associate the event with LGBT, and holding the events surreptitiously.

Although it is relatively easy to see that democratization has been detrimental to LGBT Indonesians in helping the resurgence of Islamic politics to counter-attack LGBT, I tend to see the democratization period as a frame in which multiple events happened, converged, and interacted with each other. The globalization of LGBT rights discourse, including the push for same-sex marriage, also happened during Indonesia’s democratic period, and has been continually and significantly contributing to recent anti-LGBT vitriol which I will address in the next section.

THE LGBT GLOBALIZATION AND POLITICAL HOMOPHOBIA

Since the 2000s, the internationalization of LGBT rights has been strong and widespread thanks to The Yogyakarta Principle, the UN advocacy messages and mandates on sexual orientation, and the push for same sex marriage and fulfillment of LGBT rights in many countries^[15]. Human rights language is increasingly deployed to advocate for the protection and recognition of LGBT people. What I see vividly through this LGBT globalization is the universalization of LGBT identities and the merging of variations of same-sex and/or non-normative sexual desires and practices into one category: “LGBT”. For example, *bissu* (indigenous non-binary gender shaman in Bugis society) and *waria* (*wanita-pria* / female-male or inadequately translated as male-to-female transgender) began to be associated with LGBT^[16]. While they provided strong justification that non-normative genders and sexualities do not originate from the West, the moves to label other same-sex practices and other gender diverse indigenous cultures as “LGBT” run the risk of erasing local practices and reducing them to LGBT identity.

The rise of LGBT discourse has led to sexual practices being recognized as a part of one’s identity, bringing greater visibility and citizenship rights, which in turn gave birth to what is now popular as “LGBT rights”— a concept that is still foreign to Indonesian society, in which sexuality is taboo and barely talked about in public^[17]. Heterosexual marriage and building a family remain intact as the primary marker of an ideal citizen and adulthood in society.

The US marriage equality and human rights language deployed in international LGBT discourse has also provoked a reactionary response towards LGBT Indonesians, since their movements are always associated with efforts to legalize marriage equality and Western infiltration. Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu even argued that the LGBT movement is a form of proxy war to culturally defeat another country^[18]. Opponents of LGBT movements also claim that marriage equality would dismantle family principles, traditional gender norms, and societal norms. Therefore, with all of this misjudgment, the government has stated that there is no such place for LGBT movements in the country.

Scholars Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons have an interesting outlook on this trend^[19]. While LGBT rights discourse cannot be seen as separate from shared liberal values in Western societies, efforts to transplant it to non-Western countries could be counterproductive and would only result in further damage and peril to local communities. Also, an unfortunate fact we have to acknowledge is that most of the Indonesian public still sees homosexuality as a mental illness, sinful behavior, and irreconcilable with Indonesian culture and society^[20]. The persistent enforcement of LGBT rights and a liberal approach would simply lead to nowhere, if not provoking a conservative backlash.

However, as I talked anonymously to some ministerial staff members working on health and social inclusion for minorities to explore the impact of the

anti-LGBT vitriol in 2016, I unearthed some surprising facts. Far from total denial toward the existence of LGBT people, these ministerial offices are actually still working for gay men, men having sex with men, and transgender people through supporting shelters for warias, sensitizing health workers to provide non-discriminatory health services to men having sex with men (henceforth MSM)^[21] and gay men, and providing livelihood skills for waria to eradicate this stigma. Many warias are still stigmatized as sex workers and public nuisances. Compared to their gay and lesbian counterparts, many of them come from a poor socio-economic background, exacerbated with the structural impediments to enter the workforce and higher education, just because of their non-normative gender expression.

According to my key informant, the program his office implemented trains warias to be good hairdressers or to have other livelihood skills. This program gradually eradicates the stigma of being waria in her surroundings. For example, a waria begins to be known as “Anita, a good hairdresser”, instead of her waria identity. He also argued that their sexual practices would not be problematic as long as it was practiced in private spaces^[22].

This discussion brought me forward to the cultural concept of “achievement” [prestasi] that resonates strongly with Indonesian society. Contribution to society at large remains a valuable asset to influence people’s perceptions of an individual. Boellstorff (2007) argues that Prestasi, which can come in the form of personal achievement or contribution to society, could help the public to change its negative prejudice against LGBT people. By succeeding in one’s career or contributing positively to people around that person, this would help to loosen the association of being gay and the myth of gay sexual promiscuity. Taking advantage of prestasi potentially serves as an entry point for gradually obtaining social acceptance. Differing significantly from Western gay discourse, which overemphasizes sexual identity, this Indonesian model places a greater significance on the achievements and contributions to society, rather than “coming out as LGBT”^[23].

Similarly, since HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases are quite prevalent among MSM and gay men, one of the ministerial offices still works on sensitizing health providers to gender and sexuality-related information, or what she referred to as “SOGI” (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) training. My key informants told me that this program was really useful to equip the health workers with adequate knowledge on MSM and gay men’s health issues. In addition, it also reduces the stigma against homosexuals among healthcare providers.

These discrepancies between the state’s public denouncement and the real practice of some ministerial offices reveal the complexity of political homophobia^[24]. The state is always about both representation and practices. Both can be either coherent or contradictory. In this case, political homophobia actually operates primarily at the representational level. The idea of ideal/common citizens or what the state apparatus refers to as the “public” has been envisaged through normative attributes— heterosexual, religious,

moral-oriented, and reproductive. The widespread anti-LGBT pressure from various elements of civil society and religious groups confirm these persisting ideas; citizens demand that the state fulfill and endorse these normative ideals.

In other words, the state's representation of political homophobia here aims to cater to the "normative public" upon which the state relies and from which the state derives its power and legitimacy. At a practical level, although the state is still working for these non-normative groups, it frames the practices in a "non-liberal" way—it is about access, health, and poverty reduction, and does not coincide with liberal identity politics. Nevertheless, it should be noted as well that State comprises of multiple institutions that might be contradictory with each other. While particular State institutions might work for gay or transgender people, the other institutions might commit the opposite actions. For example, the recent arrests of gay participants in the alleged 'gay sex party' in Surabaya and Jakarta were actually carried out by police. Alongside the international media hysteria on the issue, it should be noticed that the criminalization in these cases is actually deployed through the anti-pornography law and the information and electronic transaction law^[25]. It is not through their homosexuality per se that the outlawing process occurs, but through other practices – the possession of pornographic materials and the transactions occurring before the participants joined those gay sex parties.

WHAT IS NEXT?

I do not close this article with a conclusion. Conclusion often is too limiting. Realities multiple and shift rapidly these days, so do the LGBT issues in ASEAN, particularly Indonesia. As such, the increasing visibilities of LGBT people and the globalization of LGBT rights have inadvertently affected the region. Unfortunately, LGBT issues have not been discussed thoroughly yet, although efforts of criminalization and political homophobia have been rampant in some countries, Brunei, Malaysia, and also Indonesia. In 2006, ethics philosopher Peter Singer simply argued that homosexuality is not immoral because it harms no one^[26]. The Indonesian case of homophobia (or even some other ASEAN countries) reveals that homosexuality issues are more complex and are more than just moral or immoral debates; they are about national reactions to the rapid transmission of global discourse, the dynamic of movements and counter-movements in democracy, and also the state's multifaceted representation which place sexuality as a political issue of our contemporary time. Hence, in the "50 Years of ASEAN", no exaggeration that LGBT issues are the pressing issues for the region.

**This article was written from January- March 2017 when the author was also doing fieldwork for his thesis.*

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- [3] See Kate Hodal. (2012). Flying the flag for ladyboys: Thai airline takes on transgender flight attendants, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/17/pc-air-transgender-flight-attendants>.
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- [5] See Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons. (2015). *The Queer Wars*. UK: Polity.
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- [9] See Hendri Yulius. (2016). Over the rainbow, <http://www.newmandala.org/over-the-rainbow/>
- [10] See Baiden Offord, (2010), *Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia: Arrested Development!* in Manon Tremblay, et. al, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State*, England: Ashgate. He argued that, "In my research over the years with gay Indonesians, for example, sexual identity is placed well after the priorities of family, nation, and Allah or Jesus, and has no explicit place in filial and social relations (Offord 2003a)" (pp. 145).
- [11] See Tom Boellstorff. (2005). *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- [12] See Hendri Yulius. (2016). Ahok and hate speech: the (unexpected) outcome of democracy, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2016/11/03/ahok-and-hate-speech-the-unexpected-outcome-of-democracy.html>
- [13] See Hendri Yulius. (2015). Regulating the bedroom: sex in Aceh criminal code, <http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/sex-in-acehs-criminal-code/>. As I argued here, "The law criminalises liwath, which is defined as anal penetration between men... It is unclear whether criminalising liwath is intended to criminalise gay sexual orientation. There is an obvious difference between sexual practice and sexual orientation: not all gay men practice anal sex, for example, while some heterosexual couples do".
- [14] As I explained in *Who Constructed LGBT Identity in Indonesia?*, "Today, waria or gender non-conforming gay men continue to be arrested alongside female sex workers by local public order officers, and sent to assessment camps for creating a public nuisance". Their non-conforming gender expressions and visibility also increase their vulnerability to this discriminatory practice.
- [15] See Dennis Altman. (2001). *Global Sex*, Chicago: The Chicago University Press; Dennis Altman & Jonathan Symons. (2015). *The Queer Wars*, UK: Polity.
- [16] As I argued in *Over the rainbow*, "It is interesting to see how waria and bissu—two local elements of gender and sexual identities—have also increasingly been conflated with Western LGBT identity in Indonesia. The term waria (wanita-pria/female-male) often frivolously translated as male-to-female transgender, was introduced by the Indonesian government in 1978, while the term bissu held a special status in Bugis society that instilled androgyny with a sacred meaning— a God can descend only to a gender-free body. These local identities and indigenous practices definitely provide strong justification for the contemporary Indonesian LGBT movements to demonstrate that non-normative gender and sexual expressions and identities do not originate from the West as Indonesian conservatives believe and often claim. However, the emergence of the term LGBT in Indonesia last year has inadvertently changed the way people see non-normative gender expressions and identities. Besides entering everyday language, the Indonesian public now increasingly associates men with feminine mannerisms with being LGBT".
- [17] See Hendri Yulius. (2016). *The War on Homosexuality*, <http://www.newmandala.org/war-homosexuality-indonesia/>. I argued, "LGBT is now not only a sexual or gender identity category but also suffused with citizenship rights, including marriage. Unexpectedly, this sexual citizenship model has become increasingly universalized".
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[19] As Dennis Altman and Jonatan Symons (2015) argued, "It is difficult to separate the idea of an 'LGBT' identity or community from a particular set of individualistic values that are not necessarily shared beyond western liberal societies, and we recognize that the language of activism has helped promote a backlash. Above all, the emphasis on same-sex marriage has become a touchstone for unease in many parts of the world" (2015: 107).

[20] See Victor Hoff. (2012). POLL: Indonesia Sees Sharp Spike In Anti-Gay Hate, <https://www.queerty.com/poll-indonesia-sees-sharp-spike-in-anti-gay-hate-20121029>. The report demonstrates that "The Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) reported that almost 81% of those surveyed would object to having a gay or lesbian neighbor, about double the number who would object to someone of a different religion".

[21] This term refers to "men who have sex with other men, but do not label themselves as gay". It is commonly used in public health, particularly HIV and other STD-related discourses.

[22] As I argued in *The War on Homosexuality*, the idea of "sexual rights" is still foreign to Indonesian society. Further, "The globalization of sexual identity politics and related rights has condensed varieties of same-sex or non-normative sexual desires and practices into one category – 'LGBT'. This consequently sees the emergence and universalization of LGBT identities. And when sexualities become identities, they are imbued and entangled with citizenship rights, which in turn gave birth to the notion of sexual rights and citizenship".

[23] See Hendri Yulius. (2016). Overcoming the catch-22: reflection of the current anti-LGBT hysteria in Indonesia, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hendri-yulius/overcoming-the-catch22-a_b_9589264.html.

[24] In *The emergence of political homophobia in Indonesia: masculinity and national belonging* (2004),

Tom Boellstorff argued that political homophobia (and/or homophobic violence) is seen as "the properly masculine response to these events [which] indicates how the nation may be gaining a new masculinist cast. In the new Indonesia, male-male desire can increasingly be construed as a threat to normative masculinity, and thus to the nation itself". However, in this article, I reveal that political homophobia is more complex than just restoring masculinist ideas to the nation.

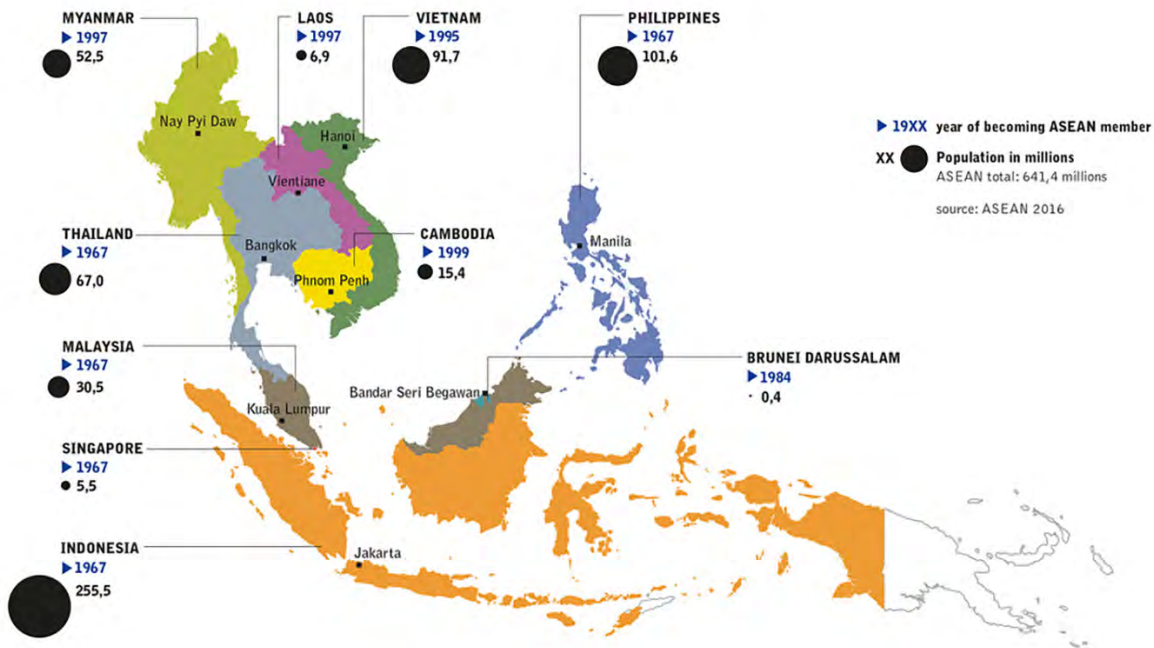
[25] See Hendri Yulius. (2017). Moral Panic and the Reinvention of LGBT. <http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/moral-panic-and-the-reinvention-of-lgbt/>

[26] See Peter Singer. (2006). Homosexuality is not immoral in Project Syndicate, October 16, 2006.

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CREATOR: SABINE HECHER

Member states of ASEAN

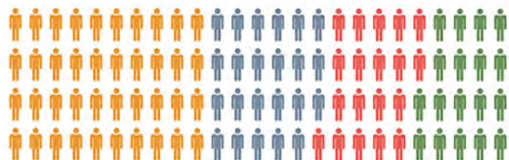
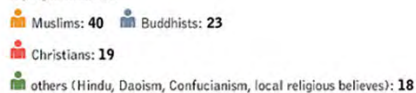


Diversity of ASEAN

if ASEAN were 100 people ...

RELIGION

X people would be:



AGE

X people would be:



POPULATION

X would be from:



LANGUAGES

X people would speak ... as mother tongue:



source: CIA world factbook

Name of head of state

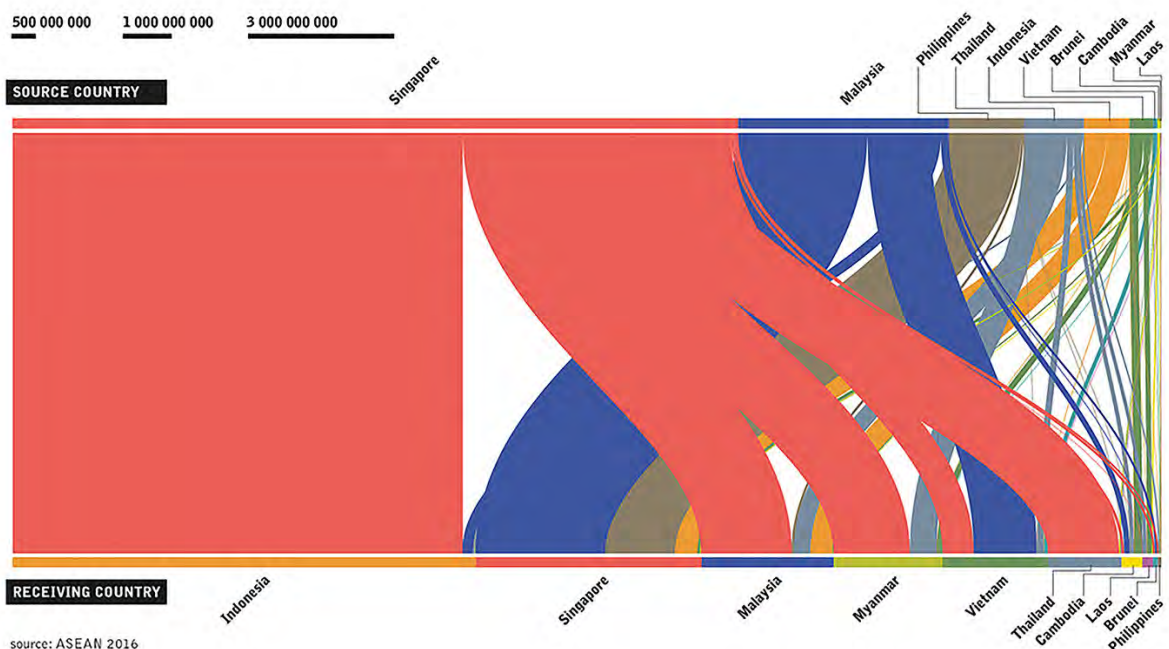
Function and in power since ...



Finances

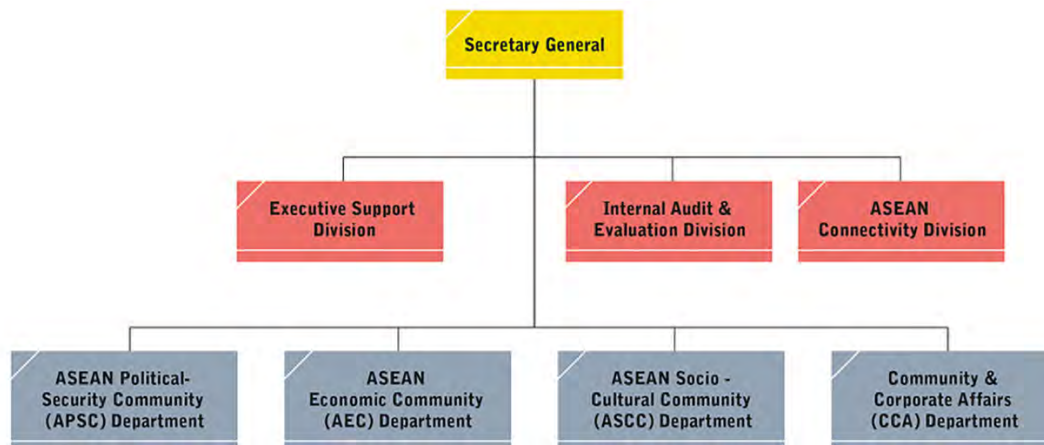
Foreign Direct Investment Flow

in US-Dollar



Structure of ASEAN

ASEAN is an association of 10 Southeast Asian nations which share a number of interest. Decisions are based on consensus. The highest decision-making body is the annual ASEAN summit. The chair of the summit and other conferences rotates among the member states following the alphabetic order. The ASEAN secretariat, based in Jakarta, is the most important steady organ. Together with the member states, it is working towards the ASEAN community vision 2025 in the three core areas security policy, culture and economic development.

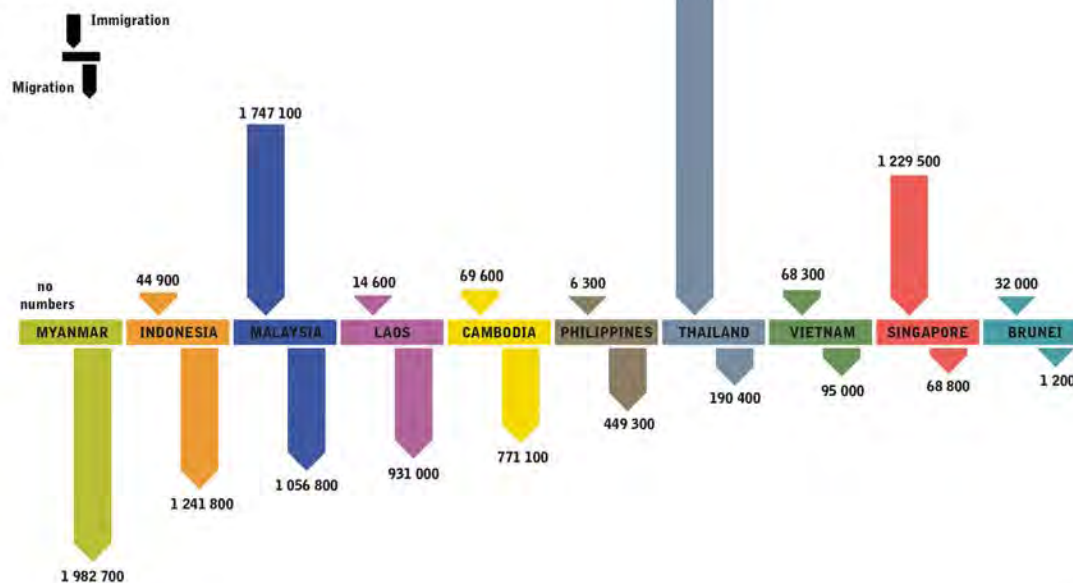


Migration

Flows within ASEAN

total 6 788 100 people

no. of people

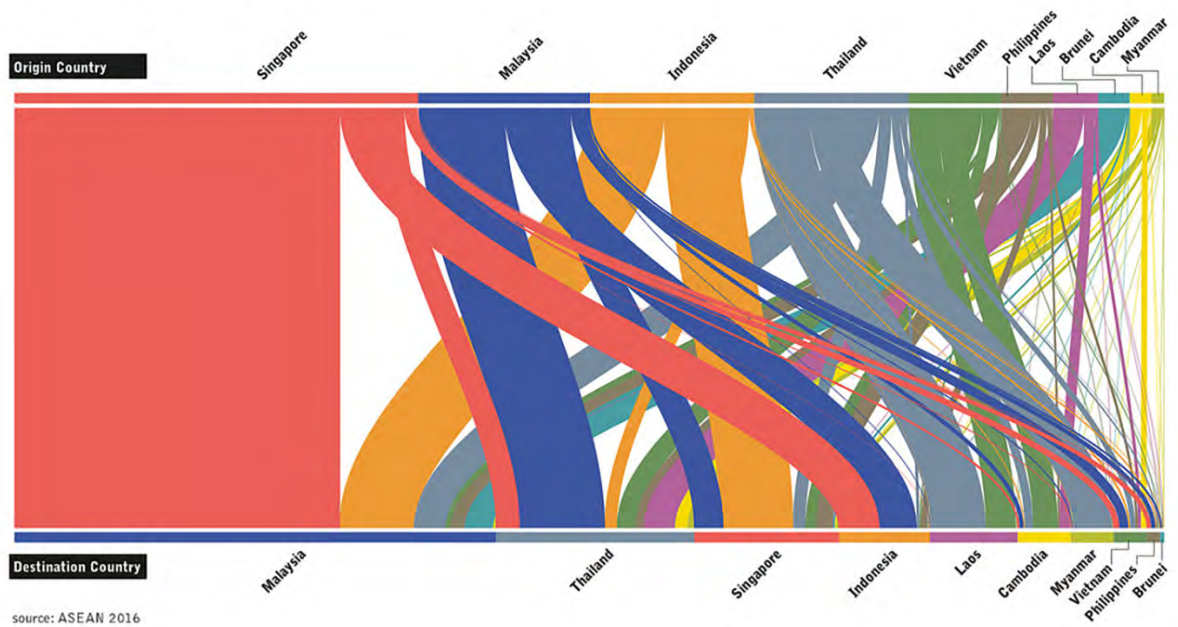


source: ilo 2016

Tourism

Number of Visits from ASEAN country to another ASEAN country

1 000 000 5 000 000 10 000 000



SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS

LIVING IN BORDER ZONES

“Mountainland” is an ongoing long-term project by the photographer Sascha Richter that surveys the lives and societies of Zomia. The pictures presented here were taken as first part of the project in October 2016 in the Northwest of Vietnam. More parts of the series can be found at: <http://sascharichter.co.uk/mountainland/>



A twelve-year-old girl is taking care of her relatives during the day, while their parents are working on the fields.



A boy collects paper trash in order to sell it for about one dollar per kilogram on a nearby market. This way he helps to support the family's income.



A group of people is negotiating the price for a water buffalo on a local market. Buffaloes can serve as farm animals as well as an investment, with prices ranging up to 2,000 USD.



Three generations are harvesting the family's rice that will serve them as food for the coming year. Children are an important work force for poor families, who help earning the income.



In the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam markets are held every Sunday. They are important for selling and buying local agricultural products, household utensils, medicine and the occasion for social and cultural exchanges, also among people of different ethnic groups.



A family is threshing rice crop on their field.



Women are using baskets to separate rice grain and straw as part of their harvest work.



Children are performing to a Communist Party of Vietnam's song that is played every day at school. Most of the children do not understand the meaning as their mother tongue is not Vietnamese.

CREATOR: SASCHA RICHTER.

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES IN ASEAN

Despite its diversity, ASEAN member states have one common trait: state repression. This is in contrast to ASEAN's aspiration to be people-centered. How repression looks on the ground can illustrate the example of the Bersih movement for fair elections in Malaysia.

by Khoo Ying Hooi



Bersih Protest in Kuala Lumpur.

CREATOR: KHOO YING HOOI.

Southeast Asia's varied historical and geopolitical circumstances have created diversified local political structures. Amidst globalization and social transformation, some Southeast Asian countries have adopted democratic systems. However, many more remain authoritarian or communist regimes.

Despite differences in political structures, Southeast Asian countries share one common trait, notably the existence of state repression, which brings a threat to the civic space in the region. While the region has made some remarkable political transformations with old political establishments having been challenged by the emergence of opposition forces and civil society,

doubts remain as to the future prospect of ASEAN as a regional grouping which can provide democracy spaces for dissenting voices.

Since the 2007 ASEAN Charter, ASEAN has been pursuing political and democratic reforms under the umbrella of the three pillars within the ASEAN Community, albeit at a slow pace. Some principles of the Charter have not been adequately implemented, and to some extent, are almost neglected by some ASEAN member states.

This is particularly true when it comes to issues concerning human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms, good governance, and the rule of law.

Now, as the regional organization celebrates its 50th anniversary and its promise to bring about a rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered ASEAN, there is increasing concern over the shrinking civic spaces in the region. Several member states continue to pressure and enforce laws restricting freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly as a way to monitor and control civil society activities.

YELLOW WAVE: HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Malaysia is one of the founding members of ASEAN, and it has since played an active role in the regional grouping. In Malaysia, democracy is a contested term in a political system marked by authoritarianism and rigged elections. Malaysian politics is not only marked by the rivalry of political parties, but is also characterized by escalating public discontent and social protests with contrasting demands.

Since achieving its independence in 1957, Malaysia has been an electoral authoritarian regime with competitive elections (Ufen, 2012). Scholars have characterized the mixed model of democracy and authoritarianism of the Malaysian political system in different terms. All of these terms, however, assert that the state exercises dominance over society.

Some scholarly works classify Malaysia as a “quasi-democracy” (Ahmad, 1989), since it partially practices Westminster democracy. Means (1996) also characterizes the political system in Malaysia as “soft authoritarianism” or “semi-democracy,” while Giersdorf and Croissant (2011) term it as “competitive authoritarianism.”

Since 2007, a wave of mass protests organized by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) has attracted much attention to electoral politics both within Malaysia and internationally. Initially known as the Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform (JACER), which started out in 2005, Bersih is a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose aspiration is to push for a thorough reform of the electoral process in Malaysia.

The ruling National Front (BN) won its highest ever victory in parliament during the 2004 elections, which triggered some awareness among opposition parties. Without an agenda to push forward for clean and fair elections, there would be no opportunity for them to flourish.

Realizing the reality of the electoral system in the country, NGOs began to consolidate joint efforts for clean and fair elections, which then took form as the Bersih movement. In the beginning, Bersih was an opposition political party-driven movement, which later on developed into a non-partisan movement and “free” from political influences in April 2010, around two years after the 2008 elections.



Bersih Movement in front of the Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur.

CREATOR: KHOO YING HOOI.

MASS STREET RALLIES FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

The formation of the Bersih movement is particularly interesting, as some have argued that it is an attempt to topple the ruling coalition BN. However, when I personally spoke with some of the movement's activists, they insisted that it was apolitical and solely aimed at electoral reform.

Thus far, the Bersih movement has organized five mass street rallies in 2007, 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016, in spite of the fact that such situations are not a common trend in Malaysia. Each protest resulted in a different outcome. The five mass Bersih rallies were seen as a key challenge to authority and also a threat to the government's legitimacy.

Also called as the "Yellow Wave" (Mustaffa, 2008), mass actions and street demonstrations not only occurred in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, but also in many other cities around the world. Organized by overseas Malaysians who called themselves the Global Bersih, these overseas Malaysians have taken rallies to a global stage.

The Bersih movement is arguably an influential symbol of electoral reform, and is iconic as a pro-democracy movement. Many factors contributed to the eruption of political discontent in Malaysia, which subsequently led to the important role of social movements like the Bersih movement.

A number of factors contributed to the explosion of political dissatisfaction and discontent in Malaysia, including blatant corruption, cronyism, unfair legislation, institutional mismanagement, and public frustration with the ruling administration, among others (Khoo, 2014). Public discontent with unpopular government actions is escalating the frequency of street demonstrations.

These individual frustrations were finally translated into collective action and transformed into resources that brought the people to the streets in the Bersih's first rally on November 10, 2007. Bersih's influence was formed not only through the identity and framing that originated mainly from the grievances by the public; its influence also emerged from the existence of a consolidated opposition coalition, and the opposition's alliances with a growing number of electoral reform groups in the country.

CAN PROTESTS BRING CHANGE TO MALAYSIA?

During the first rally on November 10, 2007, organizers were subjected to various forms of police intimidation. They faced roadblocks and water canons. In addition, the Home Affairs Ministry questioned the legality of the movement, as it was not registered with the Registrar of Societies (ROS).

As the first Bersih rally was held prior to the nation's general election in 2008, it was arguably one of the reasons the ruling coalition BN did not garner a two-thirds majority in government, for the first time since 1969. The second rally was held on July 9, 2011. At that time, the political environment had changed and the run-up was tense.

The police issued a long list of restrictions: entries were barred in certain places, and 91 people, including opposition leaders and activists, were banned from entering the nation's capital Kuala Lumpur. Both the police and the government were criticized by the local and international community for what demonstrators claimed was unwarranted heavy-handedness (Khoo, 2016).

In response to the rally, the government established the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform (PSC) in October 2011 to address fundamental electoral issues. The committee made 22 recommendations, which included the use of indelible ink on voters' fingers to prevent them from voting twice.

This was implemented in the 2013 general election. Due to the lack of further significant electoral reforms, the Bersih movement decided to organize another mass protest. This third rally was held on April 20, 2012 and there were significant tensions with the police and among the protesters themselves. Several violent incidents, such as the overturning of a police car were reported (Khoo, 2016).

Between the second and third rallies, the government introduced the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (PPA) as a way to regulate public protests. The act came into effect only five days before the third rally. The organizers held a fourth rally on 2015, in the aftermath of the general election in 2013, which was tainted by accusations of gerrymandering.

The protest took place for two days from August 29 to 30 (Khoo, 2016). Later on, Bersih decided to have its fifth rally on November 19, 2016. What is interesting about the 2016 rally is the significant appearance of the counter-movement started by the Red Shirts.

COMMUNICATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

At the beginning of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's administration, Bersih increased electoral reform advocacy by utilizing social media, as they had limited access to the proper channels such as television and radio, especially for mobilization of supporters. Mass rallies and mass communication via social media became the strategies of choice for mobilization due to the limited space as provided for the movement to flourish (Khoo, 2014).

As depicted by an activist turned politician, the Bersih movement did not emerge in a vacuum; instead, it was built on elements of previously established initiatives and used these as momentum to carry the movement forward. Although the ruling coalition BN faced systematic challenges, it was able to repress protestors by restricting civic spaces, temporarily halting political change. Though constant demonstrations were covered extensively, its long-term impact remains uncertain.

Since its formal establishment, the Bersih movement has proven that it is more than just a collection of people pushing for electoral reforms. Its popularity has turned the movement into an important social force in Malaysia. It has contributed to a greatly increased level of political awareness, especially among young voters.

The movement has positively influenced the attitude of Malaysians towards elections, regardless of their political inclination. In the past, Malaysians were known to be apathetic and complacent about elections as well as national and state politics. However, this has since changed, and it is undeniable that Bersih helped trigger the people's engagement in politics. Nonetheless, it has had a limited electoral and political outcome due to the constant repression posed by the government.

The Bersih chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah was held under the Special Offences (Security Measures) Act of 2012 for 11 days because of the 2016 Bersih rally (Yiswaree and Ida, 2016). More recently, police are now probing three Bersih officials for allegedly failing to submit a 10-day notice in relation to the candlelight vigil with Maria at Dataran Merdeka under Section 9(5) of the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (Kow, 2017).

CHALLENGES OF CIVIC SPACE

In some parts of Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, the role of political parties and the level of state repression are two important elements in determining the opening or closing of civic spaces. Despite the growing public discontent and grievances about government policies and the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Razak, Malaysia is a relatively stable, semi-authoritarian regime.

This explains why the regime continues to hold on to power. As protests organized by the Bersih movement have grown in size over the past decade, the fear among Malaysian citizens remains, as state repression still exists.

With the advancement of technology and social media in the twenty-first century, public discontent and civic spaces are now more easily mobilized compared to previous times. However, the constant regulation of civic spaces and the Internet through legislation aimed at curtailing freedom of expression and information, as well as freedom of assembly and association, is alarming.

Civil society's concerns over ASEAN member states' lack of recognition of civil society's role in the region are constantly being ignored. Even though the ASEAN Community aspires to be people-centred and people-oriented by putting its people first, civil society spaces still remain restricted.

2017 is a particularly critical year for ASEAN as it celebrates its 50th anniversary; it is timely for Southeast Asia to prove itself as a region that emphasizes putting ASEAN's people first. Such recognition of civil society, not as a threat, but as an important ally in ensuring the realization of human rights for all ASEAN citizens, is critical to the development of a sustainable ASEAN Community.

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Traditional Farm House in Myanmar.

CREATOR: JUDITH BOPP.

NEW STRATEGIES OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION IN ASEAN

Organic food production is still a niche market in ASEAN countries, yet one on the rise. Health and ecological concerns have brought sustainable farming methods including small-scale and organic farming back to the table. Perspectives from Thailand, Myanmar, and Singapore.

by Judith Bopp

SRISING INTEREST IN ORGANIC PRODUCE IN ASEAN

Just as the global health food trend indicates, organic food production is gaining momentum in ASEAN countries. It appears that three factors have given impulse to this upswing: the abandon of traditional farming in favour to industrial farming, deteriorating public health, and new lifestyles including food awareness.

Organic scenes are interspersed, progressive and yet limited in their outreach. They involve civil society stakeholders and are institutionalised in a range of consumer groups, farmers associations, farmers markets, health shops, delivery schemes and urban gardening groups (cf. Asian Farmers' Association), one objective being "to strengthen and move forward the existing movement of agroecology in Asia" by achieving environmental and societal well-being (Towards Organic Asia).

The organic farming business generally accompanies those scenes. Several countries have introduced organic labels (cf. e.g. VECO Vietnam; GOVPH). The governments of individual countries have started to engage in organic farming policies, although with some reluctances.

Budget is being allocated for organic farming training, workshops and marketing. However, the success of those measures has to be seen with reservation for many hardly sustained (cf. Htoo Thant (b), Bopp 2016: 181).

ASEAN AS A REGIONAL COMMUNITY

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was created in 1967 with the idea of physical and symbolic regional unity that would embrace the members' distinct features and ambitions. It eventually widened its commitment to promulgate the ASEAN community in 2015. At the occasion of this years' 50th anniversary, their principles and purposes are newly announced.

They stress: social responsibility and solidarity among the members in achievement of a "common identity", "a caring and sharing society" "where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced" (ASEAN 2017: About Asean).

Assuming that the improvement of livelihood and societal well-being is directly linked to food and agriculture, it could be argued, the enabling of sustainable and organic farming should be among ASEAN's ambitions.

Undernutrition is reported for several ASEAN countries, and most regions deal with malnutrition (cf. ASEAN Sustainable Agrifood System: 1, 8). Action therefore needs to be directed at the assurance of food in terms of both quantity and quality.

The integrated food security framework and action plan as a reaction to the economic crisis of 2007/2008, released in 2009, takes into account the livelihood of farmers, sustainable food production and nutrition-enhancing agriculture. In this context, allusion is made to organic farming as one element within climate smart agriculture and overall food security, albeit not further specified (cf. *ibid.*).

AGRICULTURAL SETTINGS FOR ORGANIC FARMING

“Thailand received the World Bank’s assistance during the 1960s to strengthen [...] conventional mono-crop agriculture. Yields increased at first thanks to the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on the fields. [...] Indeed, from about the 1970s on, farmers started to shift to new plant varieties, animals and the use of fertilizers and to target on sale in accordance to new agricultural development models, as well as taking first loans for their investment.

A just established train line connecting Bangkok with Chiang Mai facilitated the spread of agrochemicals to the North [...]. Today’s conventional agriculture is not efficient anymore and will soon collapse if the current system continues to exist” (Bopp 2016: 169).

In fact, this reflects a usual reality in other ASEAN countries (cf. Tadeo and Baladad: 4ff.; Edwards 2013: 74; VECO Vietnam), and yet no consistent common strategies of sustainable food movement has been forged.

While the shift to alternative strategies urges, many farmers are not easily convinced, as they adjust their farming according to market opportunities and find organic farming challenging. Regardless, some farmers realise the long term benefits of shifting to the organic alternative (cf. Bopp 2016: 266).

Despite the countries’ ability to produce food locally, the share of imported foods is notable. With the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) comes the opening of the Southeast Asian market encouraging further import, often cheaper, that can impact local farmers’ ability to compete on the markets (from expert interview R-4, Bopp 2016). In this sense, organic farming might be an opportunity for farmers for its prospect of consistent prices at local markets and farmers’ self-reliance.

FOOD AND RAISING HEALTH CONCERNS

The public availability of food is of relevance in the Asian countries for it is common in many places to take one's meals from restaurants or street vendors. Consumers hence depend on the public procurement of foods which particularly concerns the urban consumers who tend to cook less at home.

In the rural spheres, farmers often maintain chemical free kitchen gardens for their own use, given that they dispose over their farm land; and yet, a widespread reality is, few farmers are able to spare time or space to grow for their home use (cf. Bopp 2016: 125; Tadeo and Baladad: 9).

The heavy use of agrochemicals in food production severely spoils farmer and consumer health (cf. e.g. Bopp 2016: 185; VECO Vietnam; Somasundram et al. 2016: 1). Organic farming movements all over ASEAN are a response to that, and yet is their importance still slight (cf. Tadeo and Baladad: 9).

Availability of organic food products typically varies from farmers markets, delivery schemes to supermarket sections. Certification is generally required for supermarkets, however, many consumers and producers prefer the so-called trust-based guarantee. Unless organic products receive certification, they are basically marketed on local or regional platforms. Except for Singapore which is not self-sufficient in terms of foods, pan-ASEAN trade with organic products seems still uncommon.

A common organic standard for Asian countries already exists. It facilitates equivalence among diverse regional standards, market exchange and global recognition (cf. UNCTAD 2012: 1). Its ASEAN equivalent, the ASOA, has recently been envisaged, including a labelling system (Vientiane Times / ANN 24/05/2016).

It is supposed to specify methods as typically required in organic production, such as soil fertility, water and crop systems (cf. Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 5 ff). An opposing point of view to that is, systematic ASEAN organic certification tends to upscale the product prices and thus exclude potential consumer groups (from interview R-37, Bopp 2016).



Expert talk around organic foods at a health fair in Bangkok.

CREATOR: JUDITH BOPP.

STATUS OF ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTION IN ASEAN COUNTRIES

There is agreement on the notion that organic farming shares most of its features with the traditional farming as it used to be practised widely on small-scale farms. There is diversity within ASEAN concerning climate and soils, plant varieties, and cultivation methods but regardless, traditional farming has manifested as an integral characteristic of Southeast Asian agriculture (UNCTAD 2012: 2).

While the modern understanding of organic farming draws from newly standardised notions in Western countries, traditional cultivation in Southeast Asia is almost inherently low-impact and biodiverse (cf. Bopp 2016: 73; UNCTAD 2012: 2, 3).

In contrast, countries almost commonly began to adopt modern technologies and synthetic input as part of their food security agendas which initially favoured their entrance into the competitive regional and global markets.

Over the period of Green Revolution and the continuous advance of agro-chemicals, traditional farming knowledge as a resource progressively faded all over Southeast Asia. Government subsidies of agrochemicals are common reality (cf. Bopp 2016: 97).

Many alternative food movements in Southeast Asia began by the needs of rural farmers. Decreasing rice prices, extreme climate related events such as typhoons, floods or droughts shifted rural households into widespread poverty; and organic farming was introduced as one mean to relief. It can provide an alternative livelihood strategy for farmers in rural or urban areas, and can beyond provide mitigation for climate change related impact (Tadeo and Baladad: 7).

NEW MOMENTUM TO THAI ORGANIC FOOD SCENES

Thailand nowadays has many organic producers measured against its size but they are weakly organised among each other. Contract farming is posing unfair trade conditions between farmers and companies, a reason why some farmers consider the change to organic farming (Bopp 2016: 172).

Despite recent momentum, organic farming is re-interpretation of traditional practice as typical for small-holders in the entire region. Those self-reliant practices were newly emphasised since the 1980s by NGOs and activists endeavouring the progress of impaired rural livelihoods.

Traditional Thai agriculture is small-scale after widely organic principles, drawing upon farm internal inputs such as manure, compost, heirloom seeds, and water storage. The currently growing organic scenes – which is urban to a great extent – is hence more akin to reemergence than new trends, and mirror their roots in the lives of rural farmers.

Within the organic movement, stakeholders are clearly determined by their health concerns— many experience cases of illness personally or within their family. Beyond, a “great part of demand for organic food originates in Bangkok where urbanites are missing options to grow or to have control over their own food” (Bopp 2016: 91, 92).

The organic movement hence began to gather urbanites who try to follow alternative lifestyles as much as the megacity allows them, realising simple and eco-friendly living, urban organic gardening and social community.

Consumer motivation is mostly personal but can transmit solidarity with producers, too. Thus are consumer and producer concerns interconnected, and mutual benefit can happen when the organic farming movement is strengthened.

TRADITIONAL FARMING VERSUS AGRO-INDUSTRIES IN MYANMAR

Unless compliance to the safe use of synthetic fertilizers in agricultural production is given, demand for organically produced foods will grow for expected health benefits, as for now notably driven by wealthy middle classes, expatriates and foreign tourists (cf. Nyun 2016).

Similarly to other ASEAN regions, Myanmar farmers deal with little financial stability, confiscation of their home and farm land, labour shortage due to out migration. Their situation forces many to invest in cash crops rather than growing for their own household, although Myanmar agriculture is still largely small-scale.

Due to previous political reservedness, the organic farming business took much time to develop, but a private sector association (MOAG) was set up in 2009 for organic farming support and certification. Thus, six organic farms had received their label by 2011 (cf. Greenet: Myanmar Organic Agriculture). Promotion of organic farming is a key objective in Myanmar's latest climate-smart agriculture strategy of 2015 but has not yet been endeavoured officially (cf. Hom NH et.al.: 6).

Priority seems to be given instead on GAP practices, since there is ambition to embark on the ASEAN market. In contrast, organic principles will take much longer to become settled (cf. Htoo Thant (a)), although it was declared, "the GAP system was introduced as an intermediate measure" towards the entirely pesticide free organic production (Htoo Thant (c)).

As much as governmental promotion of organic farming is largely lacking in Myanmar, it is NGOs that drive the sustainable scenes for rural development: Metta NGO aims at local communities throughout the country to support self-reliant, eco-friendly local farmers' practices for healthy lifestyles.

"[E]ndemic poverty, armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies" shall overcome (Metta Development Foundation 2014: 4). So-called Farmer Field Schools address food security and natural resource management embracing organic farming methods, quality seed saving and soil conservation, and are meant to support eco-friendly local farmers' practices to replenish soil and promote their healthy lifestyles. However, a number of above mentioned challenges persist. (cf. Metta Development Foundation 2014: 8, 11).

NEEDS OF THE URBAN SOCIETY IN SINGAPORE

With a high population density and built-up surface, the city state cannot provide vast arable area. By urban extension, farming areas ever diminished. Although some of the local supply – particularly leafy vegetables – is produced in Singapore itself, consumers depend to 90 percent on imported products (cf. Ling Ling 2015).

Recent acquisitions were about 200 indoor agrotechnology parks in replacement of farm land, using intensive cultivation on soil, or hydroponics. Nonetheless, emphasis on preserving areas for food farming remains: The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority AVA – a Ministry of Agriculture does not exist in Singapore – has just launched tenders for farm land lease: “Local production, in particular of key food items such as vegetables, fish and eggs, remains an important part of Singapore’s food security” but shall “adopt modern practices to be more productive given these land constraints” (Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority Singapore 2017(a) / (b)).

Inside the city, urban gardening initiatives are presently being established to alter with the cityscape. They demonstrate creative alternatives to the agro-parks that also private persons can simply realise. They run on civil initiative but AVA is also involved by training and demonstration (cf. Ling Ling 2015).

Several organic shops and ordering schemes currently cater the Singaporean scenes of health conscious people. Those mostly source either from international suppliers or from their own farms that run in the neighbouring countries (The Best Singapore (b)). Products originate in Malaysia, Australia or Thailand – an organic producer in Southern Thailand gets regular orders from Singapore for her chicken eggs; a Northern Thai project for fruit and vegetables (cf. Bopp 2016: 130; 126/127).

Local organic production has not yet reached sizeable impact; however, several smaller farms in the city’s surroundings grow organically, deliver to urban households and invite for educational tours. An established eco-farm supplementing their production by imported goods does without certification as they “have no plans to sell [their] vegetables outside of Singapore” (GreenCircle Eco-Farm 2016). Their concept – “local veggies in local farm to supply for local consumers” has “won the hearts of Singaporeans” (The Best Singapore (a)).

NEW STRATEGIES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE ORGANIC FARMING SECTOR

The cases demonstrate that the shift to organic farming methods is urgent for many small-scale farmers all over ASEAN, and supported by the growing demand of health conscious consumers. The scenes derive from very similar realities and urges.

Access to safe and nutritious foods should be an asset for citizens, therefore, organic food provision should include non-wealthy consumers. This is one reason for self-certified or trust-based organic trade to be popular among ASEAN: as the certification process is rather costly for producers, it is little suitable for the local markets for adding costs to the final product. Most small-scale organic projects hence go for direct sale schemes which allow fair prices for both consumer and producer.

Organic farming as done either way, trust-based or certified, seems to provide a new livelihood strategy for farmer households all over ASEAN. As health food demand is likely to grow further, and environmental as well as socio-economic challenges are unlikely to moderate in the near future, farmers may expect stable markets from it, especially when they interact with the committed consumer groups. Health benefits experienced from dropping of chemical inputs will be drawn on the long run, and financial impasse can be resolved.

When organic farming is attributed a key role in ASEAN's agriculture, the movement can empower farmers and consumers and align with the international scenes. When done in co-existence with small-holder farming, the common ASEAN organic strategy might bring about opportunity for export.

However, the intentions of local farmer and consumer groups should not be exposed through global market ambitions. Considering the risk of becoming dependent of bigger international organisations, it is necessary to protect their identity and self-reliance

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Solar panels as a renewable energy option.

CREATOR: CARL ATTARD. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN ASEAN

Southeast Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. Anyway the countries are planning to cover lacks in energy demand and supply mainly with coal. Fossil fuels, however, are not necessary to meet energy shortages. Renewables from solar over biomass to wind have a huge potential in the region.

by **Khuong Minh Phuong**

Dependence on fossil fuel in ASEAN countries has increased rather than decreased. Fossil fuels draw on finite resources that will soon dwindle, becoming more and more expensive and damaging the environment. In contrast, renewable energy – wind, solar, geothermal and biomass – promises a future with clean energy sources which will have a lower environmental impact and will not run out.

Instead of spending large amounts on energy input and systems, most renewable energy investment is spent on materials and workmanship to build and maintain facilities. This means that the energy money could be used to create jobs and promote local economies.

In the face of dramatic economic growth, population growth and climate change, over 160 million ASEAN residents still do not have access to electricity. Speeding up the development process of renewable energy would seem to be the right solution to solve ASEAN energy issues. With abundant renewable energy sources, it is time for renewable energy to flourish in ASEAN to prevent problems such as energy shortages, global warming emissions, and protect citizens' health, the environment and the climate.

UPCOMING CHALLENGES IN ENERGY DEMAND— THE REGIONAL IMBALANCE OF ENERGY

While the ASEAN region is usually known as a rich natural energy region in the world, some countries in ASEAN perform quite poorly with regard to energy resources. According to the World Bank Database (2016), 4 out of 10 countries in ASEAN are energy importing countries including Singapore (98 percent), the Philippines (46 percent), Thailand (42 percent) and Cambodia (33 percent).

Singapore is mentioned as one of the eight economies without energy resources in the world^[i], and is completely dependent on imported energy. Cambodia's imported diesel fuel accounts for 90 percent of domestic electricity production^[ii].

In general, these countries have strongly relied on imported fuels, so they are prone to feeling the effects of rises in fuel prices and easier experiencing supply shortages than the others.

Meanwhile, other countries such as Brunei, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam are well known for exporting energy resources. These countries, whose main source of income is commercial energy, will continue to provide important energy resources to other countries in the region.

For example, Brunei produces approximately 127,000 barrels of oil per day and 243,000 barrels of oil equivalent of natural gas per day,^[iii] of which 24.3

percent is exported to Singapore^[iv]. However, a surprising fact is that exporting countries are not able to provide for their own needs.

For example, Vietnam is known as a coal exporter, but has not been able to supply enough coal for its own needs in the recent years due to the exhaustion of high quality coal. Ironically, this has led the country to experience energy shortages. With the exception of Brunei, all ASEAN countries are projected to be energy deficient.

There is still a gap in the ASEAN energy system supply and demand. Some countries generate a surplus of energy, while others are falling into an energy deficit. Electricity demand in Laos only reaches 27 percent of the total power supply. Therefore, instead of being a big concern for power security, Laos' government is interested in the commercial aspect of power, which could bring many benefits to the country.

For example, Laos could capitalize on the power grid, which has been growing in the region in recent years. Meanwhile, only 35 percent of Cambodians have access to grid electricity. Moreover, they are even subjected to high power prices, which are among the highest in the world.



The air quality has declined in many big cities in ASEAN such as Hanoi (picture), Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, and Bangkok. Therefore, this requires a proper energy-developing strategies.

CREATOR: KHUONG MINH PHUONG.

THE TIDES ARE CHANGING IN FAVOR OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

The world remains hopeful about renewable energy. Since 2015, the term “100% renewable energy” has become increasingly commonplace and is mentioned frequently. Moreover, we have seen the emergence of 100 percent renewable electricity^[v] in 14 countries such as the US, Austria, Germany, UK, Canada, Denmark, etc. Renewable energy is growing every day.

After the 2016 UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, 48 members of the forum vowed to use 100 percent renewable energy by 2050^[vi]. Australia is one of the first countries to set a high renewable energy target. Its national target of 23 percent renewable energy by 2020 was announced some years ago. In 2017, as a leader in renewable energy, the Scientific Committee of the Australian government confidently stated that there would be no technical impediments to reaching their target of 100 percent renewable energy^[vii].

Many countries have shifted or are starting to shift to 100 percent renewable energy in particular sectors such as electricity, heating and cooling, and transportation. All of them assert that renewable energy is no longer a thing of fantasy, and ASEAN, indeed, is a part of this transition.

THE FUTURE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY IS GETTING BRIGHTER IN ASEAN

Let us ask a few practical questions regarding the future of renewable energy in ASEAN. What is the renewable energy potential in ASEAN countries? Are they prepared for the renewable energy market? What about the costs, mechanisms, policies and market support for renewable energy in the region?

According to a report from the ASEAN Centre for Energy in 2016^[viii], ASEAN is richly endowed with diverse renewable energy sources such as biomass in Thailand, huge geothermal potential in Indonesia and the Philippines. Moreover, located close to the equator, the amount of sunshine throughout the year could bring a significant amount of solar potential.

Wind potential has also been a focal point in the past several years. The significant potential of wind power is reported in Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia. In light of the rapid growth of renewable energy technology and a subsequent decline in renewable energy costs, it could lead the region to move away from traditional energy resources and centralized utility models to supply energy.

For example, Laos’ energy sources are mainly traditional fuels including various biomass sources. These biomass sources include both wood and char-

coal. According to a report from the Laotian Government^[ix] in 2011, biomass energy accounted for 69 percent of total energy consumption, fossil fuel accounted for 17 percent, hydropower accounted for 12 percent and coal accounted for 2 percent.

For the whole energy supply, potential of biomass, biogas and organic waste are estimated as the important energy resources. Specifically, there is around 4100 MW of power potential from renewable energy including approximately 1450 MW from biogas, biomass and solid waste production, and 500 MW from solar.

Meanwhile, biomass could also become a diesel fuel substitute in Cambodia. Wind power is estimated at 3,665 GWh/year, and solar power is evaluated at 65 GWh per year for technical potential in the country^[x].

According to Dr. Doan Van Binh, Director of Institute of Energy Science – Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, the total potential of wind power in Vietnam is estimated at 513,360 MW, which equivalent to more than 200 times as much as power capacity of the biggest hydro power plant in Vietnam. PV power is stable during the year with around 2000-2600 sun hours per year and only reduces about 20 percent in the rainy season from the 17th parallel to the south. This number is lower at 1500-1700 sun hours per year in the rest of the country^[xi].

Other countries such as Indonesia are regarded as some of the largest geothermal countries in the world, with 299 geothermal locations and a total potential of 28,897 MW. This accounts for around 40 percent of total geothermal resources worldwide^[xii].

SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT FROM THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS

In recent years, ASEAN governments have created many short–premium–long schemes to develop renewable energy. ASEAN as a whole, as well as individual countries, set up the schemes based on renewable energy development targets. Each target was established as a share of the renewable energy power supply (see fig. 1), primary energy and final energy consumption.

They include large-scale hydropower, but do not include renewable energy in the traditional form of firewood. All countries in the ASEAN region agreed to meet the target of 23 percent renewable energy by the year 2025. Laos' government announced its own target in 2015 to meet 30 percent renewable energy by 2025. In that same year, Indonesia expects to achieve 25 percent and Vietnam expects 8 percent of their energy supply to be renewable energy^[xiii].

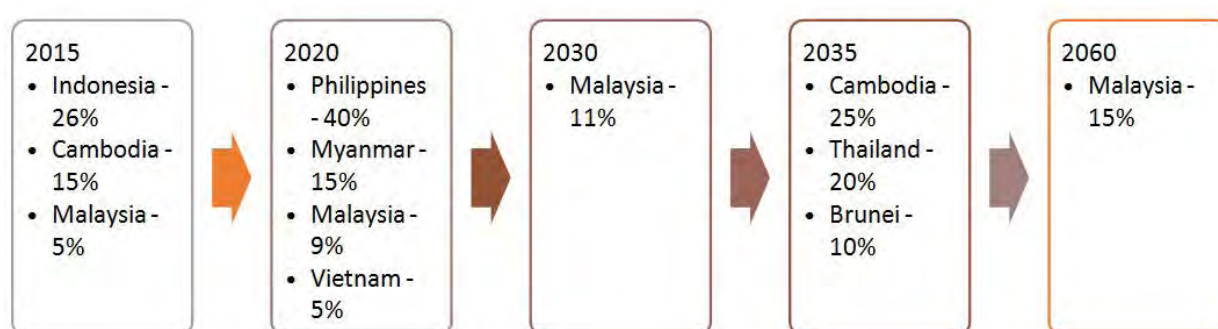


Fig 1. Targets for the share of renewable power supply in ASEAN countries.

SOURCE: ASEAN PLAN OF ACTION FOR ENERGY COOPERATION (APAEC) 2016-2025.

As leaders in the region for renewable energy loyalty, Indonesia has completed guidelines for biomass, biogas and small hydropower, and Myanmar has also announced its guidelines. Malaysia completed its guidelines for small hydropower as well as solar implementation, while the Philippines and Vietnam finalized their guidelines for solar power in early of 2017^[xiv]. Although each country has diverged from each other in terms of renewable energy, they still collaborate with each other. One such joint effort was the common target and roadmap called Remap Options for a Clean, Sustainable and Prosperous Future^[xv]. This roadmap provided a breakdown of renewable energy potential by sector and source, and established guidelines to achieve all targets.

ASEAN RENEWABLE ENERGY MARKETS – HOW TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL?

Although ASEAN has an advantage when it comes to abundant resources, it remains to be seen whether the region will be able to tap into its potential. The majority of renewable energy sources remain untouched in ASEAN. For example, looking at individual countries, only 2MW of 65GWh technical potential of solar power has been installed, while biomass and wind power are underused in Cambodia. Indonesia only utilizes 5% of its geothermal potential. With the exception of the Philippines, currently in the lead with 400MW of wind energy, wind power remains a door left open for other ASEAN countries.

In the whole region, only 51 GW or 26% of the power supply is generated from renewable energy resources, including large hydropower (2014). Without hydropower, this figure was at a mere 5% in 2014— a surprising number in comparison to the calculated potential in the region. Details of the renewable energy status in each ASEAN country can be seen in figure 2.

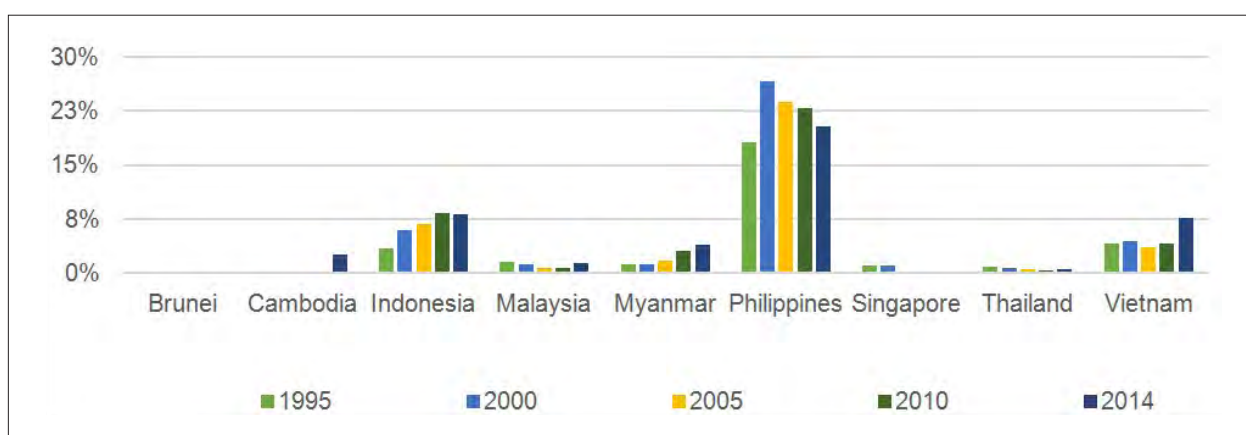


Fig 2. The renewable energy status in ASEAN countries from 1995 to 2014 - IEA^[xvi]

It is yet to be determined whether ASEAN could be a promising renewable energy market. ASEAN is on its way to becoming a driver of global development with an increasingly high economic growth rate. Along with this, the explosion of urban cities and the nonstop population growth in the region could bring both great challenges and opportunities in terms of renewable energy development. Thus, ASEAN could learn how to turn potential into reality from other countries and regions such as the European Union, the U.S. or Japan.

Considering the size of ASEAN, the EU currently has more economic power, which is further developed and well-equipped for renewable energy policies. ASEAN could use their dynamic economy as a selling point to attract more investment, as well as to save time by applying practices from the EU while developing their renewable energy market.

DIVIDING THE RENEWABLE ENERGY MARKET INTO SEGMENTS

As leaders in renewable energy development, the EU and USA have demonstrated the efficiency of dividing the renewable energy market into segments. For example, the solar market in the EU is segmented into utility-scale systems, commercial and industrial rooftop systems, and residential application. In some countries such as the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Belgium, residential solar power represents a substantial share of the solar market.

Other countries such as Germany, Slovakia and Switzerland recorded a great share of solar power consumption in the commercial sector. Therefore, capital issues are divided equally among the people, and there is a more constant flow of capital dedicated toward the development of renewable energy.

By comparing renewable energy markets in the EU, one could infer that the more widely-distributed markets such as Germany's solar PV would be less likely to collapse the PV industry than focused markets such as the Czech Republic.

Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, the five big markets of solar PV, could learn to drive the market toward this trend. However, if awareness of clean energy remains low, and information on the benefits of renewable energy is limited, this is not likely to happen.

Campaigning should be designed for people of all backgrounds including children, teenagers, students, building professionals and the general public. The actions could be diversified in games, competitions, debates, workshops and conferences, and exhibitions of real renewable energy applied models.

One example is the 10ACTION project, which took place in Europe^[xviii] from 2010 to 2012 and aimed at improving social acceptance of renewable energy.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRICE AND INVESTMENTS

In order to develop a diverse energy market oriented towards segmentation, reducing renewable energy cost has to play an important role. The relationship between price and investments is a key market starting point. The relation between high risk and high reward is the main concept for all investors.

However, for ASEAN energy markets, this does not seem so obvious due to the growing demand for power and renewable energy's cost-competitiveness compared to other power options. ASEAN energy markets might have

to find price levels where supply and demand is the least out of balance.

Fortunately, ASEAN countries may be able to save up to a decade in renewable energy development, especially through learning from the experiences in building energy market in developed countries. ASEAN could draw on past experiences and observe other markets to make this a possibility.

It is easy to see similarities between the ASEAN and EU power grids. Instead of starting from zero, ASEAN countries could get a head start by learning from the energy market reform in Europe with fixed market mechanisms to produce the right price of carbon, modules of energy mix prices, etc.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AS A TURNING POINT

Moreover, ASEAN countries have benefited from the rapid development of technology. In December 2016, the WEF reported that solar and wind were the same price or even cheaper than fossil fuels in more than 30 countries^[xviii]. In February 2017, ABC News announced that solar energy in Australia was cheaper than retail power prices in most capital cities^[xix].

The explosion of technological development is marking a turning point in renewable energy development. In November 2016, a new PV roof made by Tesla CTO JB Straubel proved to be less costly than a regular roof, even before energy production^[xx]. The CEO of the company claimed that such technology could bring huge gains to the entire supply chain as well as to customers.

With a huge potential of solar power, this new technology could be the right solution for ASEAN to solve the perception or high risk among investors and project developers. Additionally, this would also open the door for residential customers to equip their houses with solar PV.

Aside from profiting from renewable energy developing achievements of the world, ASEAN also needs to work together with other countries to solve energy storage issues. As renewable energy usage increases day by day, supporting greater amounts of renewables on the grid and ensuring the quality of electricity, energy storage is becoming the big question in both on-grid and off-grid systems.

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THE FUTURE OF FORCED MIGRANTS IN ASEAN

How ASEAN deals with forced migrants shows in how far it is actually people-centered and people-oriented. This vulnerable group used to be integrated in the past. However, today it appears integration efforts are not truly inclusive.

by **Andika Ab. Wahab**



Refugee Children in Malaysia peeking through a window.

CREATOR: ANDIKA AB. WAHAB

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) turns 50 in 2017, and this coincides with the Philippines' Chairmanship with the set theme of "partnering for change, engaging the world". Half a century after coming into existence, is the regional grouping ASEAN becoming better or worse? Generally, ASEAN has progressed quite well in many aspects, including regional integration efforts, narrowing development gaps, maintaining peace and improving social landscapes across the region.

Nevertheless, such progress is not all-encompassing. In other words, it's not entirely inclusive as of yet. There are vulnerable segments of the population who are not being included or who are left behind in the integration process. One such group is the forced migrant population, broadly referred to here as refugees and asylum seekers.

As of 2015, a total of 284,949 refugees and asylum seekers had registered in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines (UNHCR, 2017). There were no records of forced migrants registered in any other ASEAN member states in 2015.

One simple question worth explanation - are forced migrants who seek refuge in ASEAN member states included in the national population census? Or are they a part of the nearly 630 million people in ASEAN (ASEAN, 2016)? If not, they are not likely to be included in national development initiatives, let alone regional integration initiatives.

In the meantime, the number of people fleeing persecution is unlikely to decrease in the near future due to geopolitical uncertainty, ongoing civil wars, military intervention and human rights violations occurring in almost all parts of the world.

THE TREND OF FORCED MIGRATION

Trends of forced migration have evolved unconventionally due to globalisation, technological advancement and a higher level in transport connectivity. Consequently, ASEAN is no longer a safe haven for the forced migrant population from its individual member states, but from other regions and continents as well.

For example, about 14 percent of the total 65.3 million forced migrant population are currently hosted by nations in the Asia-Pacific region, where the majority (53 percent) come from three major nations, namely, Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria (UNHCR, 2017). How ASEAN is to respond to these trends relies heavily on the commitment of individual member states and shared responsibility to make the region a place called "home" for everyone.

This article seeks to discuss how ASEAN could ensure that their regional integration efforts are truly “inclusive”, guaranteeing a better future for the forced migrant population in the region. This article also discusses what commitments ASEAN and its member states have pledged in the past.

To what extent have past experiences influenced the regional grouping and its member states to address the present situation of forced migration? More importantly, how can ASEAN and its member states best respond to the situation of forced migration in the future?

REGIONAL APPROACH IN HANDLING INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES

The regional approach in handling a massive influx of forced migrants within the Southeast Asian (SEA) region is not a new phenomenon. The founding members of ASEAN, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, served as asylum countries for almost half a million Indo-Chinese refugees in the late 1970s, and this continued up until the early 1990s.

Each of the member states had its shared responsibility. Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia played the leading role by providing more spaces and opportunities for the Indo-Chinese refugees to seek temporary shelter before being resettled to third countries or repatriated back home.

Singapore, despite obvious space limitations, committed to host around 900 refugees in 1979 and 480 refugees in 1982 (UNHCR, 2017). Likewise, the Philippines, despite its remoteness, managed to provide asylum to 5,300 refugees in 1979, and this number increased nearly fourfold to 20,300 refugees in 1980 (UNHCR, 2017).

This commitment was not made without acknowledging the actual risks and future implications for ASEAN or its member states. ASEAN fully acknowledged that such a commitment would establish a precedent, and ultimately would create a “refugee magnet phenomenon” that would attract more and more asylum seekers to seek refuge in the future.

The individual member states also recognized that such a commitment would create more social problems internally.

Government agencies would face economic costs and administrative burden by handling the influx of refugees and coordinating humanitarian responses from international organisations (Suhrke, 1980).

Despite multiple barriers, their collective commitment to provide temporary asylum to Indo-Chinese refugees demonstrates ASEAN’s common stance and positive track record in responding to the complex and highly politicised situation of forced migration in the region. There are three observations that

could better explain why such a commitment was successful from the late 1970s up until the early 1990s, but this might not be necessarily replicable at present.

THE DEALING WITH FORCED MIGRATION IN THE PAST

Firstly, there was a greater international response and commitment by third countries such as the U.S., and international organisations were able to reduce the burden of first asylum countries in ASEAN through rapid resettlement and substantial financial assistance.

In the period between 1979 and 1980, for instance, the monthly resettlement quota to third countries was increased to 23,000 applicants, and two-thirds of the applicants were taken by the U.S. On the financial side, international organisations spent about 100 million US dollar on managing the refugee population in Thailand over a period of six months from October 1979 to March 1980, while UNHCR allocated roughly 30 US dollar million for Malaysia (Suhrke, 1980).

With commitments from the U.S., international and intergovernmental organisations, the number of refugees temporarily sheltered in ASEAN member states rapidly decreased, and simultaneously lessened the cost implications incurred by asylum countries.

Secondly, Vietnam (the origin country of the majority of Indo-Chinese refugees) was not part of ASEAN until 1995. Hence, the collective commitment of ASEAN member states to provide temporary shelter to Indo-Chinese refugees was not incompatible with ASEAN'S non-interference principle.

Third, the willingness of ASEAN member states to take the risk and shared responsibility to provide temporary shelter was meant to maintain a good relationship with the U.S., with a very clear objective of balancing the growing influence of China and the Soviet Union in the region.

These are the three factors that helped strengthen the collective response of ASEAN and its member states in handling forced migration in the past.

A RULE-BASED COMMITMENT IN THE AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

Present-day ASEAN consists of 10 member states, including countries which had initially produced refugees, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam. To further strengthen their collective integration efforts, ASEAN leaders from the 10 member states came together in Singapore in 2007 to sign and witness the creation of the ASEAN Charter, and hence become a legally binding document for the regional grouping.

Without a doubt, the establishment of the ASEAN Charter is a manifestation of a renewed political commitment to boost the community-building process. It also paved the way for the expanded roles and mandates of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the proliferation of ASEAN bodies related to human rights, among others, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).

These regional human rights institutions are expected to promote and protect the rights of ASEAN citizens in accordance with the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), the ASEAN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Unlike the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, however, no specific mention of the term “refugee”, “asylum-seeker” or “forced migrant” is referred to in any of these key ASEAN documents including the ASEAN Charter and AHRD.

This is due to the lack of ratification among member states - only Cambodia (1992) and the Philippines (1981) ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The rest of the member states are not ready, and have not shown any indication to ratify the convention, despite having demonstrated positive commitment in the past.

At the national level, the term “refugee” is not officially recognised or referred to in national laws, policies and administrative procedures among non-signatory parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention, including Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Apart from the lack of collective political commitment by the regional grouping, there are other observations that could better explain the reluctance of individual member states to commit to a legally-binding obligation in handling forced migration in the region.



ASEAN foreign ministers interface with AICHR Representatives, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 2015.

CREATOR: ANDIKA AB. WAHAB.

REASONS FOR THE LACK OF COLLECTIVE POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO RECEIVE REFUGEES

Firstly, the post-Cold War era marked the proliferation of emerging and multifaceted security threats that weakened and exposed states and society to transnational security risks. These included threats originating from terrorism and militancy, the smuggling of atypical immigrants, human trafficking as well as drug and arms smuggling - all of which were broadly linked to the movement of refugees in the region.

The complex nature of these threats prompted ASEAN member states to be overprotective and subsequently unwilling to provide a rule-based commitment in handling forced migrants. Member states such as Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, however, claimed that despite their lack of a legally-binding commitment, they would provide minimal protection to refugees including adherence to the non-refoulement principle on humanitarian grounds.

Secondly, the post-Cold War era also marked new trends of forced migration, especially from other regions and continents to ASEAN countries. Although

the number of people seeking refuge in ASEAN member states reduced by nearly half from 437,530 in 1980 to 284,949 in 2015 (UNHCR, 2017), the variety of nationalities is more diverse now than ever before. For instance, Malaysia is now a country of asylum for forced migrants originating from Angola, Burundi, Bhutan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria, Guinea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Rwanda and Senegal (other than Myanmar) (UNHCR, 2017).

Similar trends of forced migration occurred in Thailand and Indonesia, which saw a greater diversification of nationalities compared to the period before the 1990s. Overall, of the 284,949 registered refugees across the ASEAN member states, about 11.3 percent (32,127) are non-ASEAN refugees, the majority of which come from Western Asia, South Asia and certain African regions. This indicates that the forced migration population will likely be the toughest challenge facing the regional grouping in the future.

CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FOR FORCED MIGRANTS

Neither past history nor the current situation are likely to predict the future of forced migrants in the region in this age of geopolitical uncertainty, unequal development and profound inequality. The best way to predict the future for forced migrants in the region is to create it. However, to create a better future for forced migrants, it requires strong leadership, political commitment, a willingness to share burden and responsibility to protect on the part of ASEAN and its individual member states.

A concrete regional commitment to respond to forced migration can only be achieved when the majority of individual member states have a clear position and commitment at the national level.

However, this has not been the case with ASEAN thus far. Individual member states, especially the largest refugee-hosting countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, should play a leading role by transforming their humanitarian approach into a legally-binding commitment in order to provide concrete and sustainable protection for the forced migrant population.

The fear of the unknown implications of a legally-binding commitment should not stop countries from ratifying the 1951 Refugee Convention, as the motives of forced migration are not determined by a member state's ratification status. For instance, Malaysia has yet to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not recognize refugees in its country, but the number of refugees seeking asylum in Malaysia increased significantly from 5,412 individuals in 2000 to 154,486 individuals in 2015 (UNHCR, 2017).

This suggests a weak correlation between the country's status of ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the "refugee magnet phenomenon" in the region.

Apart from geographical factors and the opportunity to benefit from various economic activities such as entering the informal labour market in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, providing minimal protection to refugees collectively served as the pull factors which attracted asylum seekers to seek refuge in their respective countries, even in the absence of a legally-binding commitment.

MOTIVES BEHIND FORCED MIGRATION

ASEAN and its member states should also acknowledge the motives (push factors) behind forced migration, whereby refugees are forced, without many options, to leave their home countries in search of international protection. In such circumstances, refugees will find a way to reach these countries by risking their lives being smuggled by careless third parties who take advantage of the lack of integrity among certain enforcement personnel.

At the national level, individual member states should strengthen access to justice and administrative procedures, ensuring every one of the forced migrants has equal access to basic needs and rights in the asylum process. Members of civil society organisations (CSOs) including medical, faith-based and humanitarian organisations should be provided with the necessary financial support and assistance to enable them to perform their duties efficiently.

Relevant government agencies should work hand in hand with the members of CSOs in order to reach out to forced migrants and provide necessary assistance.

The willingness of individual member states to commit to these obligations would influence fellow member states to do the same. This can be witnessed in the way that the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand unknowingly competed with each other in response to the Rohingya crisis in late 2016.

There is nothing bad about a little diplomatic rivalry, however, this is not leading to concrete commitment at the national level in any of the three countries. Given the lack of national commitment by the individual member states, exactly how and what kind of a role should the regional grouping play?

ASEAN established its regional human rights institution, namely, the AICHR in 2009, with an overarching mandate to promote and protect human rights. The AHRD (Article 16) dictates ASEAN and its member states' commitment to ensure the right to seek asylum. The AICHR is rightly positioned to lever-

age its mandate to develop a regional strategy to encourage member states to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.

This would strengthen their commitment to guarantee the right to seek asylum in the case of forced migrants. As an ASEAN body that holds meetings every year, the AICHR should establish a permanent agenda on forced migration to be mainstreamed in its Priority Programme and Five Year Work Plan.

STRATEGIC COOPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS ARE NEEDED

The expansion of non-ASEAN refugees in the region suggests that this is no longer an intra-regional issue that can be solved exclusively through internal means. As ASEAN and the AICHR are the overarching regional human rights bodies, they should explore ways to establish strategic cooperation and partnership focused specifically on forced migration issues with the African Union, African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) or the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Apart from leveraging the existing regional human rights mechanism, ASEAN should develop a more concrete and sustainable platform to discuss issues related to forced migration beyond the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. The logic is simple. Forced migration is an issue of political security, socio-cultural and economic integration. Hence, a fourth ASEAN Community pillar may be established to discuss regional solutions to multifaceted issues such as forced migration.

To conclude, the forced migrant population by default has been a part of ASEAN society since the Indo-Chinese refugee crisis in the late 1970s up until the very recent Rohingya catastrophe. The uncertain international response to reduce the burden of asylum countries indicates that forced migrants will likely be in a "protracted situation" as they wait for a definite solution.

As ASEAN strives to strengthen its regional integration efforts and pledges to be truly inclusive, people-centred and people-oriented, the regional grouping and its member states must provide opportunities and empower the forced migrant population to be a part of this regional integration process.

The growing presence of non-ASEAN refugees also indicates the need to reflect this emerging trend of forced migration into the regional agenda and integration initiatives. The rationale behind this is to better manage and integrate them rather than ignoring their presence in the country. By then, forced migrants, regardless of nationality, will be able to contribute to the hosting society, regional integration and create their own future.

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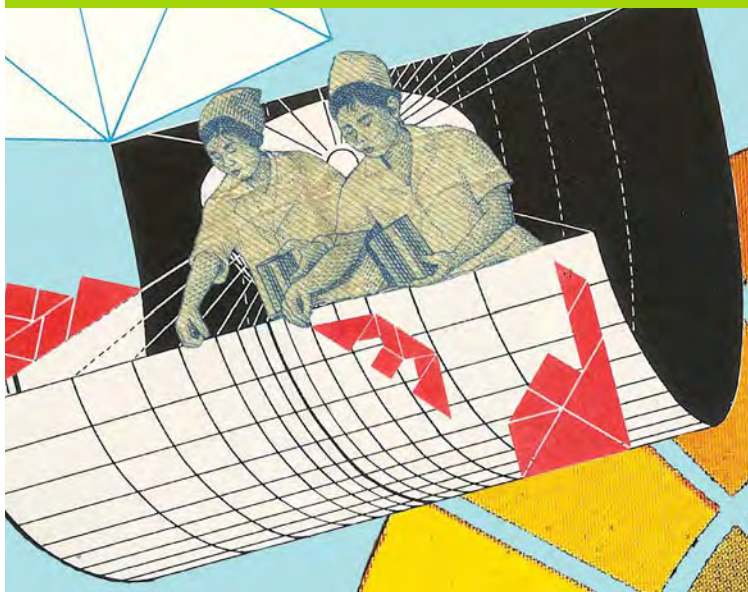
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