



DISCUSSION
PAPER
SERIES

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
PROGRAM ON ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

UP CIDS DISCUSSION PAPER 2020-04

Deepening Solidarities Beyond Borders Among Southeast Asian Peoples

*A Vision for a Peoples'
Alternative Regional Integration*

Eduardo C. Tadem, Karl Arvin F. Hapal, Venarica B. Papa,
Ananeza P. Aban, Nathaniel P. Candelaria, Honey B. Tabiola,
Jose Monfred C. Sy, and Angeli Fleur G. Nuque

ISSN 2619-7448 (PRINT)
ISSN 2619-7456 (ONLINE)

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
PROGRAM ON ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

UP CIDS DISCUSSION PAPER 2020-04

Deepening Solidarities Beyond Borders Among Southeast Asian Peoples

A Vision for a Peoples'
Alternative Regional Integration

Eduardo C. Tadem, Karl Arvin F. Hapal, Venarica B. Papa,
Ananeza P. Aban, Nathaniel P. Candelaria, Honey B. Tabiola,
Jose Monfred C. Sy, and Angeli Fleur G. Nuque

**DISCUSSION
PAPER
SERIES**

The **UP CIDS Discussion Paper Series** features preliminary researches that may be subject to further revisions and are circulated in limited copies to elicit comments and suggestions for enrichment and refinement. The views and opinions expressed in this discussion paper are those of the author/s and neither reflect nor represent those of the University of the Philippines or the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. Papers in the series are not for quotation or reprinting without permission from the author/s and the Center.

Deepening Solidarities Beyond Borders Among Southeast Asian Peoples

A Vision for a Peoples' Alternative Regional Integration¹

Eduardo C. Tadem, Karl Arvin F. Hapal, Venarica B. Papa,
Ananeza P. Aban, Nathaniel P. Candelaria, Honey B. Tabiola,
Jose Monfred Sy, and Angeli Fleur G. Nuque²

ABSTRACT ■ For fourteen years (2005–2019), civil society organizations (CSOs) in Southeast Asia, under the umbrella of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) have been engaging official ASEAN bodies and yearly summits. This is

¹ This is a revised, updated, and expanded version of the vision paper approved by the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) 2017 Philippine National Organizing Committee on November 18, 2016 and presented at the ACSC/APF 2017 Conference, November 10–14, 2017, Quezon City, Philippines and at the ACSC/APF 2019 Conference, September 9–11, 2019, Rangsit, Thailand. The original paper was published in the Conference Report of ACSC/APF 2017.

² Eduardo C. Tadem, Ph.D. is Convener of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) and Retired Professor of Asian Studies at the Asian Center, UP Diliman. Karl Arvin F. Hapal is Co-convenor of the UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development and Assistant Professor of Community Development at the College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD), UP Diliman. Venarica B. Papa is Project Leader at the UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development and Assistant Professor of Community Development at the College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD), UP Diliman. Ananeza P. Aban, Nathaniel P. Candelaria, Honey B. Tabiola, Jose Monfred Sy, and Angeli Fleur Nuque are research and project staff of the UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development. Correspondence to the authors may be coursed through upad.cids@up.edu.ph.

done via parallel gatherings in countries hosting the ASEAN meetings. Intense discussions among CSOs and peoples' organizations across the region result in statements containing detailed recommendations for a more democratic, inclusive, participative, and ecologically sound ASEAN on behalf of the region's marginalized and excluded populations. Unfortunately, ASEAN has ignored these proposals and has been largely dismissive of CSO engagements. This vision paper proposes a new strategy for Southeast Asian CSOs, social movements, and peoples' organizations—one premised on moving away from engagement with ASEAN and establishing a new peoples' regional integration based on the alternative practices on the ground—an integration from below that will be the direct opposite of the ASEAN model of integration.

KEYWORDS ■ ASEAN, civil society, alternative practices, peoples' regional integration, Southeast Asia



Introduction

The perceived failure of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to meaningfully address the issues and concerns of Southeast Asian peoples is viewed by the Asean Civil Society Conference/Asean Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) as rooted in the ASEAN's being locked in a market-centered and state-supported process conceived by regional and national elites to perpetuate their control over the region's natural resources and productive capacities.

Under the mantra of “profits before people,” ASEAN leaders make decisions without the meaningful participation of the marginalized and disenfranchised peoples of the region and are accountable only to the narrow vested interests of economic elites and political oligarchies. This has only further widened the gap between rich and poor within and among countries, and caused unparalleled debasement of the environment. ACSC/APF notes that ASEAN's continued adherence to a neoliberal model of development prioritizes corporate interests and elite groups over the interests of Southeast Asian peoples.

Given the above, this vision paper proposes charting new directions and crafting new modes of regional integration for Southeast Asian peoples in light of an in-house assessment by ACSC/APF that ten years of engagement with the official ASEAN process from 2005 to 2015 have been consistently characterized by “ambivalence, hesitation, resistance” by ASEAN governments leading to “disappointment and frustration...on the part of civil society” (Lopa 2016, 58). This paper recommends a radical restructuring of civil society engagements with Southeast Asian states by crafting a new regional peoples’ integration in order to implement an agenda independent of the state and the corporate-biased ASEAN process.

Premises

Several premises underpin the need for new directions and 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 and diverse cultures and histories on the 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 on the other. This strategy was conceived and undertaken by regional and national elites to perpetuate their control over the region’s natural resources and productive capacities and rule over the greater masses of Southeast Asian peoples. Starting in 1967 as a mechanism to support the United States (US)-led Western faction of the Cold War, it has evolved into a tool of the neoliberal market-led agenda of development promoted by global capitalism.

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, but should include areas in other countries whose peoples bear similar cultural and ethnic characteristics as those who live in what has been normally referred to as Southeast Asia. In addition to Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste, both of which continue to be denied full ASEAN membership, references have been made of Southeast Asian historical affinities with parts of Northeast India and three southwestern provinces of China

(Scott 2009, 13–14).³ Our vision of a region without borders is, therefore, not contingent on citizenship and location.

Secondly, the crucial decisions accompanying initiatives and developments in the ASEAN process have been made without the participation of the marginalized and disenfranchised peoples in the region. Thus, ASEAN's leaders and the decisions they make are not accountable to the people, only to the narrow vested interests that their corporate allies and political oligarchies represent.

Thirdly, ASEAN's guiding framework of "profits before people" and unbridled economic growth, which is encouraged and supported by international financial institutions (IFIs), has only further widened the gap between rich and poor within and among countries, and caused unparalleled debasement of the environment. As the ACSC/APF 2015 statement argued,

The failure of ASEAN to meaningfully address the people's issues is deeply rooted in the organisation's continued adherence to a neo-liberal model that prioritizes corporate interests and elite groups, including state-owned enterprises, over the interests of the people. (ACSC/APF 2015, 1)

Fourthly, ASEAN's unbending adherence to the 17th century Westphalian state model which emphasizes absolute sovereignty and unrestricted territorial integrity has been a convenient shield by member governments and elites against being held accountable for actions that oppress peoples and debase nature. Moreover, as scholar-activist Kinhide Mushakoji has written, this model may

³ James Scott (2009, 14) identifies as part of Southeast Asia several states and provinces of China and India such as "southern and Western Sichuan, all of Guizhou and Yunnan and extreme northeastern India." These areas were seen to have common traits with "most of northern Burma, the north and east of Thailand, all of Laos above the Mekong Valley, northern and central Vietnam, and the north and eastern fringes of Cambodia." This vast Southeast Asian highland region, called "Zomia," is distinguished in all aspects, from the valleys and lowland areas, including especially its resistance to state formations.

no longer be that relevant in the age of 21st-century globalization, where porous boundaries and labor migration patterns have created dual and sometimes multiple identities of peoples transcending ethnic and cultural lines (Mushakoji 2014, 133–37). Mushakoji’s notion of “multi-ethnic, multi-identity, and multi-cultural societies” effectively clouds the concept of a distinct and singular national identity.

Southeast Asian civil society must, therefore, look and reach beyond the narrow boundaries of nation-states, territorial demarcations, and ethnic distinctions in order to develop a regional solidarity and identity based on common histories, aspirations, and a vision that would transcend the narrow confines of territories, nationalities, ethnic identities, and citizenships. The ACSC/APF, in its vision, goals, and objectives, should operate accordingly.

The above perspective is especially relevant in light of territorial disputes that characterize the region and the relationships among its nation-states. If identities are shared regionally and the notion of homogenous racial stereotypes are rejected, this would go a long way in easing tensions among nations and facilitating the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples’ Forum

The ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples’ Forum is a network of Southeast Asian civil society organizations and social movements that has been engaging the ASEAN process in order to bring attention to the issues and concerns of its constituencies, namely, the working class, the peasantry, urban poor, fisherfolk, women, children, LGBTQ+ community, indigenous peoples, older persons, employees, professionals, students, persons with disabilities, and migrants. It has been the hope of ACSC/APF that the engagement process will result in meaningful and substantial dialogues with government leaders and decision-makers and lead to reforms and changes in ASEAN.

Such engagement, however, is informed by a fundamental critique and rejection of ASEAN’s own guiding neoliberalist framework. As the 2015 ACSC/APF Statement pointed out,

Our engagement with the ASEAN process is...anchored on a critique and rejection of deregulation, privatisation, government and corporate-led trade and investment policies that breed greater inequalities, accelerate marginalization and exploitation, and inhibit peace, democracy, development, and social progress in the region. (ACSC/APF 2015, 1)

While the ACSC/APF has been engaging ASEAN governments and its leaders since 2005, there has hardly been any progress in making ASEAN recognize civil society's legitimate concerns, let alone seriously implement the range of proposals presented at the annual summits of ASEAN heads of state. Indeed, the attitude shown by ASEAN in its dealings with civil society groups can best be described as tokenism of the highest order. It has thus been a frustrating and unproductive fourteen years of ACSC/APF engagement with ASEAN.

An internal ACSC/APF Ten-Year Review concludes 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" and that "individual ASEAN member countries have consistently resisted and vacillated with regards civil society participation and engagement" (Lopa 2016, 9). The ACSC/APF 2016 Timor Leste Statement expressed frustration over the lack of attention to civil society concerns repeatedly raised in all official ASEAN gatherings:

ASEAN civil society remain 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, particularly on issues related to development justice; democratic processes, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms; peace and security; and discrimination and inequality. This continues to connote disregard of the need to engage substantively with civil society in ASEAN and is cemented in the lack of open and safe space that promotes meaningful and substantive participation, inclusion and representation of all peoples of

ASEAN, including indigenous peoples, women and children, amongst others, in the various processes of ASEAN structures and mechanisms. (ACSC/APF 2016, 4)

The 2016 statement castigated ASEAN on its use of empty self-declarations with respect to its relationship with ASEAN peoples and makes a plea for what it feels are overdue recognition and respect:

ASEAN needs to stop using its rhetoric on “people-centred” or “people-oriented” without genuinely making the commitment and institutionalizing a process where all interests of its diverse peoples are included in its policy documents and agreements through meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders. This in principle requires ASEAN to recognize the robust role of a free and independent civil society movement in the best interest of the region and in the respective member states that is key in supporting and upholding good governance, fundamental freedoms and rule of law. It is critical thus for ASEAN to take all measures to respect, promote and create a safe and open space for civil society that is free from threats, attacks and unjustified detention of human rights defenders. (ACSC/APF 2016, 5)

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 government...[and of] ASEAN governments’ lack of recognition of civil society as a critical stakeholder...” (ACSC/APF Co-Chairs 2016, 1). Such disappointments, however, will surely persist unendingly as official slogans like “a people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN” continue to ring hollow in the face of governments’ practices over the past fifty years of ASEAN’s existence. The regional group’s lofty pronouncements and seemingly progressive declarations and agreements exist merely in a pretentious world of rhetoric, and have never been meaningfully put into actual practice.

ASEAN's neglect of meaningful engagement with CSOs is evident even to outside observers, such as the scholar Helen E.S. Nesadurai,⁴ who observed that

[D]espite a growing rhetorical commitment to engagement with regional civil society, at the practical level official ASEAN continues to resist civil society's call for its greater involvement in ASEAN processes of agenda setting, deliberation and decisionmaking. This does not mean that there is no engagement between ASEAN and regional civil society. Civil society participation has, however, been mostly confined to areas of functional utility to ASEAN, usually depoliticized to emphasize the technical expertise and grassroots familiarity of CSOs and local community group. (Nesadurai 2012, 9)

ACSC/APF engagement with ASEAN has become a mechanical process with CSOs gathering several times a year to produce a document that generally rehashes past statements, afterwards presenting this to ASEAN government agencies. A period of waiting for official responses ensues, followed by frustration and disappointment that the elementary courtesy of a substantial official reaction is never given.

While ASEAN promotes the constricted and self-serving interests of ruling bureaucratic and corporate elites, ACSC/APF thinks and acts on behalf of marginalized, dispossessed, and disempowered peoples of the region. Its constituents are the peoples and communities of the Southeast Asian region. How to meaningfully translate this preferential option for the poor into concrete and practical efforts is the question that confronts the ACSC/APF today. Needless to say, moving beyond ASEAN creates certain challenges in achieving a new vision for an alternative type of regional integration.

⁴ Helen E. S. Nesadurai is Associate Professor at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Sunway Campus of Monash University in Malaysia and has been studying civil society engagements with governments in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN’S Attitude towards Civil Society

ASEAN’s recently discovered rhetoric of being “people-oriented and people-centered” (ASEAN 2007) is not matched by its actions and attitude vis-a-vis civil society. As Nesadurai (2012, 9) observed:

ASEAN’s preference, reflected in recent official documents and blueprints, appears to be for a civil society that will help it achieve the already established goals and projects of ASEAN’s governing elite rather than a civil society that will—through genuine, two-way deliberations—help ASEAN set these goals and agendas in the first place.

ASEAN’s patronizing and condescending attitude towards CSOs is best reflected in how the body officially characterizes CSOs. The 2012 ASEAN Guidelines on Accreditation for Civil Society Organization define a CSO as

a non-profit organisation of ASEAN entities, natural or juridical, that promotes, strengthens and helps realise the aims and objectives of the ASEAN Community and its three Pillars—the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. (ASEAN 2012, 1)

Similarly, the guidelines issued on February 11, 2015 by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) define CSOs as:

the association of persons, natural or juridical, that is non-profit and non-governmental in nature, which are organized voluntarily to promote, strengthen and help realise the aims and objectives of ASEAN activities and cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights. (ASEAN AICHR 2015, 1)

ASEAN “encourages” CSOs to seek accreditation with it in order to be granted the “opportunity and privilege of participating in

ASEAN activities” (ASEAN 2012, 1). Notice ASEAN’s patronizing tone in refusing to recognize CSO participation as a “right,” only a “privilege and opportunity.” Approval of accreditation, however,

...shall be based primarily upon the assessment of the positive contribution which such a CSO could make to the enhancement, strengthening, and realisation of the aims and objectives of ASEAN... [and that] the objectives of the CSO’s activities should be consistent with the aims and objectives of ASEAN. (ASEAN 2012, 1)

In other words, CSOs are expected to merely adhere to and follow ASEAN’s aims and objectives. Obviously, the ASEAN definition of and attitude towards CSOs are self-serving and run counter to internationally accepted definitions and status of CSOs as independent and autonomous players with their own vision and goals that may not necessarily coincide with state and official government vision and policies.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) for one, states that

[CSOs] can be defined to include all non-market and nonstate organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. [...] CSOs are voluntary organizations with governance and direction coming from citizens or constituency members, without significant government-controlled participation or representation. (Tomlinson 2013, 123)

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) states that “civil society is an arena where, through social interaction and struggles, excluded, marginalized, exploited and dominated social groups and individuals, are empowered to participate in decision making processes” (WHO 2007, 12). While acknowledging that “civil society operates in a contested space,” WHO argues that “an understanding of civil society is contrary to the neoliberal view which tends to look at civil society as a sanitized entity, stripped of its strong ideological, political, and cultural roots” (WHO 2007, 11).

Even the neoliberal-oriented World Economic Forum (WEF) has a more enlightened definition of CSOs. The WEF states that the CSOs' "combined aim is to hold governments into account, promoting transparency, lobbying for human rights, mobilizing in times of disaster and encouraging citizen engagement" (Jezard 2018, 2).

ASEAN's elite-centered and corporate-driven project runs counter to its avowed principles of being "people-centered and people-oriented." Kelly Gerard (2014, 1) examined the "regulations and practices that govern CSO participation in both ASEAN-sanctioned and independent spaces" and concluded that

spaces for CSO participation are structured to prevent CSOs from contesting policy, suggesting that ASEAN's shift to wide participation is directed towards legitimizing its reform agenda. Hence ASEAN's claim of becoming "people-oriented" must be considered in recognition of the limiting effect its engagement practices have on CSOs' ability to advance an alternative agenda. ... (ASEAN-CSO) interactions have been intentionally structured to prevent CSOs from contesting ASEAN policy, primarily through strict controls over who can participate and the forms of participation that are permitted. (Gerard 2014, 1)

It is time for civil society and social movements to cease nurturing false hopes about the regional grouping. To continue to do so would risk the prospect of CSO networks like ACSC/APF turning into a self-perpetuating and ineffectual cottage industry that simply tags along and behind governments, hoping that, sometime in the distant future, ASEAN would change its essential character and meaningfully relate to civil society.

Civil society groups in Southeast Asia, ACSC/APF included, must now think and act outside the ASEAN box. It must develop strategies that go beyond mere assertions of its independence and autonomy from the states' agenda. More important, it should set the example, lead the way, and initiate the process of undertaking the establishment of a

regional integration model that is the exact opposite of what ASEAN stands for and represents.

The Need for Alternatives

Even as the ACSC/APF continuously expresses its dismay over ASEAN's track record vis-à-vis its peoples, it is also hampered by an apparent misunderstanding and confusion about the real nature of the ASEAN project. In a 2016 press release, ACSC/APF appears to plead for ASEAN governments to recognize civil society, "not as a threat, but as an important ally in ensuring the realization of human rights for all ASEAN citizens (which) is critical to the development of a sustainable ASEAN Community" (ACSC/APF 2016 Co-Chairs, 1). This equivocal and ambiguous attitude is further reflected in the following statements incorporated into the 2016 ACSC/APF Statement:

We reaffirm our commitments to monitor and engage in the ASEAN processes towards a people-centric ASEAN as member states continue to aspire for political cohesiveness, economic integration, and in maintaining a socially responsible, people-oriented and rules-based ASEAN statement. ... For the peoples of ASEAN, the establishment of the ASEAN Community and ASEAN Community Vision 2025 signifies the premise and commitment of ASEAN towards a people-centred community. (ACSC/APF 2016, 2)

From the above statements, the ACSC/APF seems to entertain the illusion that the regional group can be transformed from within into something that, in the first place, it was never intended to be. But the fact is that the political oligarchies and corporate elites that control and manage the ASEAN process will never give up their agenda and make way for civil society's hopes and aspirations. Thus, any effort on the part of civil society to make ASEAN work better as a regional organization would be tantamount to supporting its neoliberal agenda and abandoning the principles upon which the ACSC/APF is founded and continues to uphold. It will also entail falling into the trap laid by ASEAN's leaders that will effectively unnerve the network and

deprive it of its moral authority and leadership among Southeast Asian peoples.

To be fair to civil society organizations and networks, they did try to overcome the constraints and limitations imposed over their engagements with ASEAN in what Kelly Gerard (2014, 1) calls “created spaces” that “bypass regional and state actors” and which “are more flexible as it is the participants who determine what takes place.” Formed in 2005, ACSC/APF is one of the more prominent “created spaces.” The problem, however, is that “despite their apparent independence from official intervention, they are still structured (and organized) in relation to ASEAN policies and practices” (Gerard 2014, 1). Thus, ACSC/APF activities are always organized to parallel the official ASEAN process and dutifully follow the organization as it yearly weaves its way around the member-states.

This situation brings up the need for civil society and social movements to present an alternative to what ASEAN is now and will be for all time. The pressing agenda is to show what true regional integration among Southeast Asian peoples is. The task therefore is to search for an alternative model of regional integration that challenges the ASEAN paradigm—one that is based on what Southeast Asian peoples are already doing on the ground and which is guided by cooperation, solidarity, mutual benefit, the commons principle, and joint development, and which rejects cutthroat competition, the insatiable thirst for profits and narrow patriotism, ultra-nationalism, and chauvinism.

Everywhere in the world, particularly in Asia, there are a large number of spirited individuals and communities, projects and programs, proving through action and achievement that there are other ways of doing things (Ichiyo, Tadem, and Parameswaran 1997).⁵ These undertakings are not merely economic. Being made voluntarily by (highly) motivated people, these efforts are also creating new

⁵ The succeeding two paragraphs are excerpted from Ichiyo, Tadem, and Parameswaran (1997).

social relationships in which practitioners are empowered socially, economically, and culturally, eroding and undermining the basis of maldevelopment, thus foretelling, if partially, the configuration of a just future society.

It is important to note that, in many cases, the traditional wisdom of Asian communities is inherited, rediscovered, refined, and successfully applied—defying the dominant mode that destroys the basic eco-cyclical linkages of human activities with nature for the sake of immediate profits and efficiency. Vibrant elements are identified in these efforts of a new civilization that we need to build.

ACSC/APF on Rethinking Engagement with ASEAN

Over the years, the ACSC/APF has acknowledged the futility of achieving concrete results from its engagement with the ASEAN process. The group's 2017 Final Statement adopted during a plenary session on November 13, 2017 concluded that:

Years of our critical engagement with ASEAN have not contributed in any substantive improvements in the state of our peoples' lives and the environment. Issues and concerns raised by civil society, especially ACSC/APF continue to be ignored. Lack of meaningful dialogue, absence of opportunities for interface with officials, and inaction over the draft terms of reference on government-non-government relations evidence the shrinking space for civil society to effectively shape the agenda and policies of ASEAN and their respective governments. (ACSC/APF 2017, 2)

The 2017 ACSC/APF Statement also sounded the alarm for ASEAN neglect of civil society “as evidence (of) the shrinking space for civil society to effectively shape the agenda and policies of ASEAN and their respective governments” (Tadem 2017). Following this, the 2017 Statement resolved to adopt both a new vision for engagement with ASEAN and establish a new peoples' regional integration process as follows:

The case for a radical transformation of ASEAN is irrefutable. Participants to the ACSC/APF 2017 firmly believe that such transformation will require taking decisive steps to ensure equitable distribution and sustainable use of natural resources, realize the full gamut of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for all peoples, and to reestablish itself along the principles of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, and friendship among nations. To this end, the ACSC/APF shall develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on greater people to people interactions that will establish, expand and strengthen a new peoples' regional integration process based on the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region's societies. (ACSC/APF 2017, 2)

Moving forward, the ACSC/APF 2018 Statement recommended that ACSC/APF “undertake a collection of grassroots case studies of community-based projects on the ground of local people taking action in building an Alternative Peoples' Economy towards an Alternative Regionalism” (ACSC/APF 2018, 2).

To highlight the importance of developing a Southeast Asian peoples' alternative regional integration, the 2019 ACSC/APF Statement contains the following task to be undertaken by the regional CSO network:

Finally, given that years of ACSC/APF engagement with the official ASEAN process have been met with lack of attention to the recommendations raised, resulting “in minimal outcomes in the substantive improvement in the lives of our people,” undertake a process for an alternative peoples' regional integration based on the alternative practices of communities, sectors, and networks. Accordingly, ACSC/APF will adopt the appropriate resolution related to the proposed process.

A resolution adopted by the ACSC/APF Philippine Process in August 2019 and by the Convergence Space on Life with Dignity in September 2019 during ACSC/APF 2019

in Thailand had the following calls (ACSC/APF Resolution 2019):⁶

Be it therefore resolved that, in order to overcome and address the vexation, frustration, and disappointment at the results of the 13-year engagement with the official ASEAN process, the ACSC-APF shall develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on people-to-people interactions rather than state-to-state relations or purely market-oriented interactions.

Be it further resolved that, to lead the way forward to greater participation by Southeast Asian peoples in cross-border interactions and undertakings, this new vision shall lead to the establishment of a new peoples' regional integration process.

Be it further resolved that, as a preliminary starting point, the new Southeast Asian peoples' regional integration process shall be based on, among others, the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region's societies.

Strategies for an Alternative Regional Integration Process

As a starting point, there is a need to acknowledge that Southeast Asian peoples and communities have, for many years and on their own, 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.

Economic alternative practices. On the production side, social enterprises, producer cooperatives, and communities engage in exchanges on the technologies of sustainable food production systems

⁶ See Appendix for the full text of the Resolution.

that are environmentally and people-friendly. At the same time, they promoted productivity and import substitution for food crops. Examples are:

- (1) Organic family farming;
- (2) Agroecology;
- (3) Biodiversity;
- (4) Zero-waste production; and
- (5) Indigenous agronomic practices (e.g., seed breeding and production).

In the marketing aspect, there are direct consumer-producer linkages via the media of alter-trade organizations and producer and trading cooperatives. The goal is to strengthen cooperation between farmers and consumers and to revive local markets. These people-to-people 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. In the matter of financing, there are credit cooperatives and alternative currency systems. In the power sector, bright prospects also exist for community-based renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, and biogas technologies.

Political alternative practices. 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 peasants' rights, human rights, human security, and many other concerns.⁷

Joint political advocacies and corresponding actions have been undertaken via mass mobilizations during international gatherings.

⁷ Specific concerns include free trade agreements, land conversions and land grabbing, militarization, pollution, climate change, disasters, migration, feminization of 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 empowerment, universal health care, access to education, power and water issues, homophobia and misogyny, trafficking, the informal sector, etc.

Lobbying with states and multilateral organizations were also done. Social media with emancipatory messages was utilized extensively. Alternatives to traditional political parties, such as a party-list system, have also emerged. A recently revived and unique phenomenon involved direct actions undertaken by peoples' organizations, or spontaneously by marginalized communities through the unilateral occupation of land and housing projects. This is a common form of resistance in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, it is known as "*aksi sepihak*." Communities have also engaged in integrated regional socio-economic planning, and have practiced conflict settlement mechanisms.

It must be admitted, however, that these political practices have yet to gel into a form of regional solidarity that sets aside national interests in favor of international unities.

Social alternative practices. In the social aspect, self-help groups have long existed and local networks have coordinated their social protection activities. Examples are community-based health systems guided by primary health care principles, "barefoot" health practitioners, and the development and fine-tuning of age-old healing practices, including the use of organic and generic medicines.

In education, we have seen alternative learning practices such as folk schools, non-formal centers, and lifelong learning advocacies. In the provision for a people-oriented shelter program, there are initiatives using vernacular architecture/housing principles that utilize indigenous designs, technologies, and construction materials. As in other practices, peoples' empowerment is a guiding principle and primary goal.

Cultural alternative practices. In terms of culture, visual artists and cultural performers have been networking through regional events that showcase the richness, diversity, and historical depth of Southeast Asia's creative arts. More importantly, political and economic issues that are the concern of civil society groups are also highlighted and represented in these cultural interactions and presentations. While it has often been overlooked compared to 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.

Filling in the Gaps

If the above practices already exist, what would be the role of an initiative in crafting an alternative peoples' regionalism model, especially by 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. If they are aware, they 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. Such aspects are important in order to build a database of practices where each practice could be examined and the best model features could be identified to point out any inadequacies and deficits.

Thorough research and meticulous documentation are skills that grassroots organizations and practitioners pay less attention to. This is understandable, as their lives are taken up by the day-to-day demands of organizing, resource mobilization, and production. Grassroots organizations and their communities need the information and analyses provided by the research and documentation of their practices 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 this requires the coming 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.

Fourth, and probably most important of all, is making sense of everything that is taking place. Popular practices constitute a rich collection of empirical data that need 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.

In building an alternative model of regional integration, the new Southeast Asian peoples' regional body should take on a prominent role in filling these four gaps and any others that may arise and require regional interventions. By doing so, it will provide an alternative model of regional integration and peoples' solidarities that transcends boundaries, borders, and nationalities. It can do these by undertaking the following activities:

- (1) Coordinating the interactions between the alternative practices;
- (2) Convening and organizing conferences and workshops of the groups and communities involved in alternative practices;
- (3) Researching and documenting alternative practices and building a database;
- (4) Conducting alternative learning and training programs based on grassroots needs;
- (5) Conceptualizing and making sense of the practices and developing new paradigms and strategies of development;
- (6) Mobilizing alternative practices, regional interactions, and 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.

Richard Falk, as quoted by Nesadurai (2012, 6), argues for a four-fold task “for more effective civil society advocacy on governance” based on the perceived role of civil society movements in “providing organizational and intellectual leadership” in human society. These are to:

- (1) Convince (all other) CSOs that they need to collaborate and present a unified front;
- (2) Consolidate and articulate a coherent counter-governance project from the myriad resistances to different parts of the hegemonic project;⁸
- (3) Coordinate the production and sharing of alternate sources of knowledge through which counter-positions to the hegemonic regional governance arrangement can be developed; and
- (4) Generate coalitions out of disparate groups that draws on common principles from these different issue areas, even as many CSOs specialize on a single issue.

On the other hand, the current mode of engagement by regional civil society networks like ACSC/APF with official bodies of ASEAN can remain as long as it will still function as a vehicle for gaining

⁸ The “hegemonic project” refers to the common agenda of the state, the ruling oligarchies, the corporate sector, and international financial institutions.

certain concessions from governments, particularly in terms of policy formulations on particular and specific advocacies and campaigns. It is also important to maintain contacts and networks among government personnel who are reform-minded and more forward-looking than the political oligarchies and corporate leaders. But engagement in terms of the old form and substance should no longer be the primary activity of the new regional network. ACSC/APF should cease to be a mere “conference,” nor its engagement be highlighted by the so-called “interface” between CSO leaders and the ASEAN heads of state.

Alternative Regional CSO Structures

In order to achieve the strategies for a new regional solidarity model, an alternative structure will have to be put in place. However, it must be a structure that liberates rather than constricts, is creative rather than bureaucratic, persuades rather than commands, is deliberative rather than argumentative, inclusive rather than exclusive, and accountable rather than seeking impunity. In other words, it is the opposite and runs counter to what the current official ASEAN structure and practices are in reality.

Offhand and obviously, a centralized structure with permanent bodies nestled comfortably in one location is out of the question. Centralization will signal the end of local and national initiatives, and perpetuate dependency between the center and periphery. It could also create a personality-oriented leadership with overblown images of its self-importance.

In keeping, therefore, with principles of popular participation and democratic decision-making, a decentralized structure is the most appropriate form for the alternative model we envision for a peoples’ regional network. The different responsibilities and tasks will be distributed and farmed out to member organizations for a fixed term and rotated regularly. The various national organizing committees (NOCs) will take charge of the decentralized functions assigned to each one. This will ensure that the national processes will not be limited to national concerns alone.

An all-inclusive and expansive Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) should include states, provinces, and regions in countries outside ASEAN where populations share identities and cultures with neighboring Southeast Asian communities as indicated above. RCC functions will also be expanded given the new tasks of the regional network. Regional consultative meetings will continue and function as before. An annual gathering of the regional network, which need not be held parallel with ASEAN official meetings, will still be conducted.

Documenting and Linking Southeast Asian Alternative Practices

Taking the initial step of putting into action the above vision and strategies for a peoples' alternative regional integration, the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) undertook the first three of the nine activities identified above.⁹

The concrete outcomes of the UP CIDS AltDev initiative were the documentation through field research of identified alternative practices in Southeast Asia. Practitioners from these cases gathered in two regional conferences on November 27–29, 2018 and October 21–26, 2019, both held in Quezon City, Philippines. A people-to-people exchange activity was also held in July 2019 in West Java and Jakarta, Indonesia. The 2018 conference, entitled “Rethinking Cross-Border Regionalism: Conference on Alternatives in Southeast Asia” produced 30 case studies of alternative practices, while the 2019 conference, titled “Building Peoples’ Movements in Southeast Asia: Towards an Alternative Model of Integration,” produced an additional 12 case studies and three development frameworks. This totaled to 42 alternative practices and three alternative development frameworks. The countries covered include Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Timor Leste, and the Philippines.

⁹ The UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development was one of the sponsoring organizations of the 2017 ACSC/APF held at the University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila.

There were also case studies of regional networks and initiatives on specific themes and issues.

The people-to-people exchange was proposed by participants during the November 2018 regional conference. The objective was to enable participant-practitioners from different countries to learn from each other as they are oriented on existing alternative practices undertaken by the hosting organization. On July 21-26, 2019, the *Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia* (KPRI) hosted the first people-to-people exchange in West Java and Jakarta, Indonesia. Participants learned how a KPRI-affiliated group, the *Serikat Petani Pasundan* (SPP), a grassroots organization in West Java, Indonesia, promoted community-based alternative practices. A culminating activity took place in Jakarta prior to the participants' departure.

The following section provides brief profiles of the 45 case studies of alternative practices in Southeast Asia. Each case study is categorized according to the four types of practices (political, economic, social, and cultural).

Political Alternative Practices

- **Serikat Petani Pasundan (SPP), Indonesia.** While officially established in 2000, the history of the *Serikat Petani Pasundan's* (SPP; *Pasundan Peasant Union*) struggle goes back to the 1980s, when student movements in Garut, Indonesia were at the forefront of promoting the rights of the farmers on agrarian reform and environmental conservation. Eventually, this led to the formation of SPP, whose membership spread to Tasikmalaya and Ciamis in West Java, Indonesia. The Union's expansion enabled it to take on other issues, such as democratization and the promotion of people's wellbeing in the community. SPP's vision is to "develop or build structure life of economic social politics based on values and principles of humanity, infinity, and justice" (Kartini 2019). To attain this vision, SPP has different goals, strategies, and activities that promote and support the autonomy of communities over

their common resources, and grassroots democracy not only in the community, but also throughout the whole society.

- **Kanlungan Center Foundation, Philippines.** Since the early 1970s, millions of Filipinos were deployed to many parts of the world by both private and government entities for the purpose of generating foreign exchange for the Philippines, and to fill-in the need for cheap labor in many developing countries in the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. In response to the worsening situation of the Filipino migrant workers, particularly that of women, the Kanlungan Foundation identified the need to strengthen the support services for migrant workers. For 29 years, Kanlungan has assisted the legal and counseling needs of thousands of Filipino migrant workers, women and men, who encountered problems and crisis situations, including illegal recruitment, recruitment and contract violations, racial discrimination, exploitation, deportation, and other security risks.
- **Nusantara Organization, Pattani, Thailand.** In Southern Thailand, where decades-old ethnic conflict is entrenched, interventions have been implemented by organizations to mitigate the impact of violence in the region. The Muslim Society in Patani, composed of different peace advocates and organizations, aims to promote the wellbeing of Patani people in the midst of the ongoing conflict. One of the organization's projects is providing paralegal training for vulnerable sectors such as women, children, and the youth. The organization also organizes strategic activities to educate the youth about peace and their role in conflict resolution. For instance, a football game between the military and the community youth allowed the two sectors to interact with one another, and somehow provided opportunity for the military to understand the local Patani situation.
- **Uniaun Agrikultores Munisipiu Ermera (UNAER), Ermera District, Timor Leste.** Under both Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian occupation, the Timorese local communities were prevented from performing their own conservation

management efforts and maintaining social cohesion. The Indonesian occupation not only depleted resources but also weakened the social structure that prioritizes communities' capacity to manage and protect their land and natural resources. Bombings and forced resettlement also contributed to adverse environmental and social changes.

In post-conflict Timor Leste, the customary practice known as the *tara bandu*, achieved strong resurgence for local decision-making, collective action, enforcement system, and agrarian reform implementation. It was observed that community-based actions using the *tara bandu* were more effective. The practice consists of organized rituals, building of altars, and the use of natural objects that signify a certain law such as prohibition of harvest of natural resources in protected areas. Ermera, the country's largest area for coffee production, has become a model for *tara bandu* implementation at the district level.

- **Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA), Indonesia.** PEKKA (Women-Headed Family Empowerment) is a non-governmental organization that helps empower women-headed households in Indonesia. PEKKA addresses the stigma that women who are solo parents face in Indonesian society. It aims to promote the rights of women and their role in advocating social change. As a way of improving the status of these women, PEKKA helps them secure pertinent documents such as divorce papers and birth certificates for their children, which are essential for them to be able to access government and financial services. The organization provides leadership training and helps women mobilize at the local level for confidence building. It also engages with other organizations, the government, and international organizations to help promote the welfare of women in Indonesia.
- **Women of the Ayta-Mag-indi, Porac, Pampanga, Philippines.** The organization of women of the Ayta-Mag-indi in Porac, Pampanga in Central Luzon delves into culture-based women organizing in order to address emerging accounts of gender-

based violence. The organization also aims to contribute to their people's ongoing struggle for self-determination and culture-sensitive governance. The Ayta-Mag-indi are a peace-loving people. And while they have struggled to preserve and pass on their culture from one generation to the next, they have become vulnerable to the influence of outside cultures, with the many accounts of development aggression and multiple displacements.

- **Arcoiris, Timor Leste.** The activism of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender expressions and sexual preferences (LGBTQ+) in Timor-Leste has been heavily influenced by HIV/AIDS programs since the early 2000s. In 2017, the public witnessed the first-ever “Pride Parade,” with a televised endorsement by no other than the country's Prime Minister. It was organized amidst the continuing struggle for acceptance against marginalization and discrimination in the country, where Roman Catholicism is an important part of the country's history. Behind this historical march are hard-fought lives. Some were even part of the country's armed struggle for independence. Raising awareness on LGBTQ+ issues and human rights remains a primary focus.
- **Social Watch Philippines–Alternative Budget Initiative (SWP-ABI).** Convened by Social Watch Philippines in 2006, the Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI) is a platform where various civil society organizations and individuals directly engage the national and local budget processes by formulating and lobbying for the adoption of alternative budget proposals. SWP-ABI formulates alternative plans and budgets which are attuned to the needs of the poor and marginalized sectors. It equally formulates development objectives such as the Millennium/Sustainable Development Goals and adheres to a rights-based framework. It builds partnerships with government agencies and members of the legislature towards crafting a people-centered national and local budget.
- **Thandaungyi Women's Group, Myanmar.** In a country rife with conflict such as Myanmar, women's groups

are spearheading initiatives to promote women's role in peacebuilding and furthering the wellbeing of their respective communities. The Thandaunggyi Women's Group in Karen state was established in 2008 with the aim of promoting peace through the empowerment of women in terms of their economic wellbeing and decision-making capabilities. The role of women is crucial for peacebuilding, and they can collaborate with the other members of the community to promote initiatives. To support their campaigns, the group's members are involved in coffee production and organic agriculture. Through these initiatives, women are able to earn for themselves and for their families' welfare. Furthermore, these new skills have helped the women to become leaders on their own, thus earning the trust of the community.

- **Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association (PADATA) and Baclig Farmerworkers' Association (BACFA).** Bukidnon province is a traditional home to many indigenous peoples, where women hold important roles in the Council of Elders. Men, however, dominate political governance. Farmers from the Talaandig and Higaonon tribes of Maramag town surface the story of how rural women defied the boundaries of the domestic sphere in defense of their ancestral domain, and continued to fight for social justice.

Theirs is a history of constant negotiations with government agencies, legal actions, mobilizations, and everyday resistance to landlordism and the corporate capture of ancestral lands via their conversion into agribusiness plantations. Landlessness, food insecurity, and descent into farm labor status have further marginalized them.

The height of the indigenous peoples' struggle was the women-led landmark occupation of two (2) former cattle ranches. Two Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) Agreements were later awarded to the indigenous peoples even as they maintain some plots for food production. These successes have resulted in women taking on tribal leadership positions.

- **Peoples vs. Pak Mun Dam (formerly part of Assembly of the Poor), Thailand.** The Pak Mun Dam is located in Klong-Jerm district, Ubonratchatane province north-east of Thailand. It is managed by the Thailand National Electricity Department and was funded by a US\$45 million loan from the World Bank. The dam impacts the local ecology and fish species sustainability, and has been continually opposed by local farmers and fishers, academics, and ecologists for more than 30 years.

While the previous Thai government gave some concessions and offered compensation, things changed with the rise of the military regime that disrupted political stability and affected negotiations. The military is seen as unsympathetic to local and grassroots grievances. Without any government support, locals have thus created their own “conserved area for fish species” (Kridsakorn 2019) with 10 areas for protecting fish species and lineages. The local peoples have vowed on keeping on moving forward on this issue until they are justified.

- **Workers’ Information Center, Cambodia.** Since 1994, the garment industry has been the “national economic backbone of Cambodia” (Sophorth 2019) as the country’s main industrial activity and main source of export revenues. Ninety percent of garment workers are women facing problems on low wages, unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment, discrimination, short term contracts, and limited social security provisions despite the setting up of the government’s tripartite negotiation committee. The Worker’s Information Centre (WIC) is the women garment workers association that seeks to empower garment workers by “organizing and providing safe space where workers can gain knowledge and power, access counselling, peer networks, training, basic healthcare and legal advice” (ibid.), plan collective action, and seek a broad range of services and support.

WIC crafted the People’s Policy on “Women’s Rights to Greater Access to Adequate Basic Social Services” which lists common problems, strategic solutions, and recommendations proposed

by Cambodian grassroots women from the garment and sex industries to the government and all relevant stakeholders to address their demands for the right to access to basic social services, improved working conditions, access to a living wage and the right to livelihood. WIC is part of United Sisterhood Alliance (US), composed of four local women organizations working directly with women garment workers, prostituted peoples, entertainment workers, and are working indirectly with farmers.

Economic Alternative Practices

- **Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT).** Inequitable land distribution in Thailand has endured over the years because of the concentrated land management of the Thai state. In addition, capitalist development has commodified land to serve a market economy. In Surat Thani Province, Southern Thailand, landless and small-scale peasants have employed alternative economic, political, social, and cultural practices to counter state-centric land management. They have applied the idea of a community land title deed underpinned by the concept of community rights to land and natural resources management. Alternative practices of land management employed by the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) community members call for participatory development and governance.
- **Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum Untuk Kedaulatan Pangan NTT, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.** Local farmers in Flores Island are reviving the production of many indigenous varieties of sorghum for food security, cultural preservation, developing a primary health care strategy, and maintaining biodiversity conservation. The region's vast dry land is unsuitable for rice cultivation, especially the hybrid varieties of produce that require much water. The so-called Green Revolution started by the Suharto government in Flores Island is perceived to be unbeneficial for those residing in these dry zones of the country. As an alternative, farmers are building their local food

movement in response to the widespread poverty, hunger, and child malnutrition that have resulted from the rice-centered agriculture development program that persists today. Through the cultivation and revival of sorghum, emphasis is laid on the importance of local identity and knowledge towards the cultivation of their own food in the community.

- **Hom Dok Hung Community-based Enterprise for the Preservation of Native Rice Varieties, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand.** The Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (SAF), Alternative Agriculture Foundation (AAF), and BioThai form a consortium of farmers and activists working for organic and sustainable agriculture in Thailand. The group works on alternative practices in agriculture in response to the negative impacts on farmers and the environment of the Green Revolution technologies that were implemented on a national scale in Thailand. The consortium works to preserve their culture and agricultural heritage. The members conduct research on the impact of conventional technologies on agriculture. They also train people to promote sustainable agriculture that does not rely on the global market. Farmers implementing sustainable agriculture practices effectively earn more than those who continue to use capital-intensive technologies.
- **Focus on the Global South, Philippines.** In the name of development, rural areas are being transformed into arenas where various actors and interests clash to assert claims over land, water, and territories. Small farmers and peasants are caught in the historical struggle for rights, recognition, social justice, and protection as food producers. In a period where financial capital, transnational corporations, and private investments hold significant power to establish control over resources, rural social movements have devised campaigns, such as “food sovereignty” to defend rural spaces and define food and farming systems for peasants. “Food sovereignty,” coined by La Via Campesina (LVC), an international peasant movement, is globally gaining traction along with “agroecology” and “seed banking” as expressions of resistance

to industry-led food production and the corporate capture of food. The experiences of La Via Campesina-affiliated groups provide a glimpse into how “agroecology” and “seed banking” are promoted by social movements in Southeast Asia as well as their adoption in communities. The study also explores the initiatives and experiences of four peasant member organizations of LVC in Southeast Asia: Alliance of the Poor in Thailand, Panggau in Malaysia, Paragos-Pilipinas in the Philippines, and Serikat Petani Indonesia.

- **Igting (Association of Social Entrepreneurs of Towerville) Members, Bulacan, Philippines.** Ma-Igting na Samahan ng mga Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville (Association of Social Entrepreneurs of Towerville) is a peoples’ organization composed mainly of mothers living in Towerville, San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan province. The members were once informal settlers in Metro Manila. Between the years 2000 to 2010, they were relocated to Towerville as part of the government’s plan to remove informal settlers from so-called danger zones or due to an impending development project. Once relocated, the settlers faced the harsh reality of the relocation sites, namely, the absence of basic services and livelihood opportunities. Through the help of a Korean non-government organization (NGO), Igting was formed to address the lack of livelihood in Towerville. Drawing from the principles of social enterprise and community organizing, Igting has since become a sustainable sewing business providing livelihood for its 40 members.
- **Gaya-Gaya Sewers, Bulacan, Philippines.** The Gaya-Gaya Sewers is a similar formation to Igting founded in 2015. The main members of the group are mothers in Gaya-Gaya, Bulacan who are pursuing sewing as a business. Like their counterparts from Igting, the mothers of Gaya-Gaya were once relocatees. They also experienced the adverse living conditions in the relocation site. Most recall the days when there was no electricity, water, and livelihood opportunities. While the Gaya-Gaya Sewers has established their business, it has continually faced challenges in terms of making its

enterprise viable. Among the issues that the group encountered were the lack of market access or unfavorable business deals and the lack of participation from its members. Currently, the members of Gaya-Gaya Sewers are pursuing the consolidation and development of their group by using techniques drawn from community organizing. In the future, they aim to grow and sustain their business to reach other mothers and help their community.

- **TriMona Multi-purpose Cooperative, Philippines.** Addressing the lack of access to healthy, organic, and safe food, as well as health problems associated with unhealthy eating and lifestyle, TriMona Multi-purpose Cooperative (TMPC) was formed in 2007 by a group of activists coming from three NGOs—Peoples’ Global Exchange (PGX), Integrated Pastoral Development Initiative (IPDI), and Kaalagad—to create a dream space of shared resources and passion for healthy food and lifestyle, fair food production and trade, and slow food (in contrast to “fast food”). For the past eleven years, TriMona Healthy Dining, now rebranded as TriMona Co-op Café, located in an area in Quezon City, where many NGOs hold their offices, has been offering a healthy menu of fresh, organic, and natural food without artificial flavoring and synthetic taste enhancers to the public. It is also a favorite venue for wellness events, parties, and meetings of friends and colleagues in the development field. For the past year, in order to address the challenge of sustainability and growth, the cooperative has opened its membership to all Filipino citizens who are interested in healthy lifestyle, attracting many new members who are inspired by the living example of the original members who exude good health even without maintenance medications in their senior years.
- **Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia (KPRI/ Confederation of Indonesia Peoples Movement), Indonesia.** KPRI, or Confederation of Indonesia Peoples Movement, is a national organization consisting of federations of workers, peasants, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, urban poor, and women. It adheres to the concept of solidarity economy,

which is rooted from the local level where the supply chain of products is independent and free from the dictates of the global capitalist economy. This concept is important for KPRI as Indonesia continues to be dependent on the importation of agricultural products. For many years, KPRI implements different projects and conducts researches on economic solidarity and transformative social protection across Indonesia.

- **Payoga-Kapatagan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PK-MPC), Isabela, Philippines.** PK-MPC was a charitable NGO that was re-organized into a multi-purpose cooperative. The case study highlights the socioeconomic model of the cooperative in response to the distressed conditions of poor peasants in Isabela province in Northern Luzon as the result of natural calamities, exploitative practices of landlords and traders, and not-so-responsible local governance.
- **Homenet Philippines and Bottom Up Budgeting (BUB) Project, Philippines.** What is social and solidarity economy (SSE)? What are its guiding principles, characteristics, typologies, and dimensions? Networks of organized home-based and other informal workers in Southeast Asia, mostly women, have been advocating for SSE for more than a decade, seeing it as a viable pathway for job creation and community-building amidst widespread poverty, inequality, joblessness, hunger, and environmental degradation. This case study will summarize lessons learned mainly from SSE experiences of organized women in the informal economy at community, municipal, and higher levels of operation in the Philippine setting. Reference to other experiences of country networks affiliated with Homenet Southeast Asia as well as the Asian Solidarity Economic Council (ASEC) will also be made to highlight the regional character of SSE advocacy, practice, and network-building.
- **Luang Prabang Organic Farm Green Community Development Association, Laos.** The Luang Prabang (LP) Green Organic Farm has a two-pronged objective for sustainable agriculture.

Firstly, the farm produces vegetables without harming the precious environment and without chemical or artificial fertilizers. Secondly, the farm also gives an opportunity to train young local farmers in organic farming techniques and be a center for visiting students to learn traditional and environmentally friendly practices. LP Green Organic farm is located 40 kilometers from Luang Prabang, Laos. It is located beside NumPa River, with fertile soil to grow beautiful organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs. The farm also locally provides some farming experiences with techniques from folk wisdom and tradition.

- **Asosasyon sang mga Mamumugon sa Nolan Nakalang Padilla Farm Workers Association, Negros, Philippines.** An alternative model of a “workers-controlled and workers-managed” enterprise is being successfully promoted by agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARB) associations albeit through arduous and oftentimes bloody struggle for land.

Addressing the challenge of ARBs to make their small piece of land productive enough for the family’s modest needs, much less pay for amortization and real property taxes with no access to capital, technical knowledge, and business networks, the concept of “workers-owned, workers-managed enterprise” is an effective mechanism in sustaining solidarity and unity among 10 ARB communities in Negros. They thus achieve a certain level of economic emancipation and development by practicing the collective spirit of working together and communally managing their production activities.

The resulting democratization of the ownership of the means of production through the collective management and control of the workers has brought substantial economic improvement to their families. Home lots are allotted for each ARB while the associations engage in livestock raising with individual members also raising their own farm animals. Opportunities are slowly created as a result of their organized activities.

Social Alternative Practices

- **Vietnam Women’s Union and Center for Women and Development, Vietnam.** The Peace House Shelter provides comprehensive and long-term support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children who were victims of gender-based violence (GBV), mainly domestic violence and human trafficking. Established in 2007, it addresses a significant gap for providing holistic support for trafficked women. At that time, there was no existing center in the country with a similar advocacy. The Shelter provides safe accommodation for six (6) months for women who experienced domestic violence and 18 months for trafficked women and girls. While these women are in the Shelter’s custody, they receive medical treatment, psychological care and counselling, and are engaged in indoor and outdoor activities. Social workers responsible in the counselling use diverse and creative approaches in order to raise awareness about gender equality, reproductive health, and human rights.
- **Integrative Medicine for Alternative Health (INAM) and the Samahan ng mga Community Health Organizations sa Tanay (SCHOT), Philippines.** In 2010, nine (9) barangays (villages) in the Municipality of Tanay, Rizal Province began their journey in developing community-managed health programs (CMHPs). Forty-seven (47) were chosen by their respective communities to undergo the Philippine Integrative Medicine (PIM) Level 1 training, the first of the three ladderized courses offered by the Integrative Medicine for Alternative Health Care System, Inc. or INAM-Philippines, a non-government, non-profit organization providing assistance to communities through facilitation of establishment of community health programs and hopefully an alternative health care system.
- **Bantay Kalusugang Pampamayanan (BKP/Community Health Watch), Bulacan, Philippines.** BKP began as a health program sponsored by a foreign NGO. The health program was situated in the context of a relocation site where health services were lacking. Drawing from years of being recipients of services and

various forms of support, BKP has transformed into a group of community-based health advocates. Currently, it has more than a thousand members from various sectors and communities in San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan. At the center of its success is its intense organizing activities and popular education among the residents. BKP's community organizing serves as the platform for popular education sessions and recruitment of potential health advocates to address common health issues and demand for better services from the government.

- **The Bamboo House as Alternative Architecture, Philippines.** The bamboo house is the quintessence of peoples' architecture in the Philippines. It has existed for at least 2,300 years, and survives to this day for several reasons: it is eminently suited to the tropical climate of the Philippines, being cool in summer and resilient in the face of seasonal typhoons and other natural calamities; it is relatively inexpensive and sustainable because bamboo can be cultivated if land is available; it can be built by the people themselves with simple tools and traditional construction techniques that are easily learned; it compares favorably with more conventional building materials in terms of strength and durability if properly harvested and treated.
- **Alyansa ng Maralita sa Baesa (ASAMBA/Alliance of the Poor in Baesa) and Sanlakas, Metro Manila, Philippines.** The struggle of more than 500 displaced urban poor families from Sitio Mendez, Brgy. Baesa organized under ASAMBA-Sanlakas has resulted in their return to their community under an on-site, in-city relocation supported by the Quezon City Government. The families camped out for one and a half months at the Quezon City Hall, staged daily protest actions, held lobby activities and regular dialogues with city officials, and won the broad support of various sectors including the religious and local officials. This resulted in their return to Sitio Mendez marked by the more than six-kilometer *Martsa ng Tagumpay* (March of Success), which was participated in by 5,000 urban poor. The "victory" of Sitio Mendez was claimed as a victory by the urban poor sector in their fight for

land tenure. Challenges remain, however, as the families are continually subjected to illegal demolition and eviction.

- **Institute for Popular Democracy, Philippines.** The National Housing Authority (NHA) is building more than 100,000 socialized housing units off-city for informal settlers in danger zones, but only 30,000 families have so far relocated to these resettlement sites. The settlers resisted and pushed for “the people’s plan,” a proposal that they will design, build, and manage on-site resettlement themselves. Relocation to off-city resettlement sites is the option least preferred by the urban poor mainly due to lack of access to water, power, and basic social services; lack of access to jobs; and high transportation costs to access livelihood opportunities in the cities. The Institute for Popular Democracy’s (IPD) work is in assisting by providing research and technical services to urban poor communities for the building of socialized housing units for informal settlers. It is, thus, part of social alternatives in terms of social protection through affordable housing.
- **People’s Movement for Just Society in Thailand (P-MOVE).** P-MOVE is a coalition of different sectors of Thai civil society who are fighting for their right to own land. Most of its members come from the rural and urban poor communities across the country. Despite the strong presence of the military in Thai politics, P-MOVE has recently held a huge mobilization in Bangkok for land rights. Members of P-MOVE have been invited by the Thai government in different meetings to address their situation.
- **World Council for Curriculum and Instruction, Manila, Philippines.** This case study is an initiative for education for compassion through community engagement as an integral part of a graduate course program in education. The academic approach for addressing development issues in the courses taught by the author is reaching out to the marginalized sectors of our society and leaving no one behind. With the multiplier effect of the volunteers’ work, the feedback from both the volunteers (the givers) and the beneficiaries (the

given) is overwhelmingly life-transforming. Indeed, this educational practice is becoming a transformative praxis for changing lives—both for community dwellers and for young professionals who have the capacity to lead and give. From this experiential learning beyond the classroom, a people’s movement has emerged called ACAPMO (Accompanying a People’s Movement) Caring Spaces. A realization has been reached that each one has the capacity to give and has the innate desire to uplift less fortunate brothers and sisters in so many ways, not only materially but also socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

- **Alternative Rural Internship Training Programme, Sarawak, Malaysia.** The Rural Internship Training Programme (RITP) began as a response to the overly market-oriented teaching programs of Malaysian universities which presently focus on preparing students of all academic disciplines to serve the market and to be servile to market values. Started in 2015, the RITP aims to expose social science students to the diversity of livelihoods, cultures, and value systems in rural Sarawak as an alternative to the market. It also trains students to be good social science researchers in the real world even as it aims to develop a sense of empathy, solidarity, and belonging between the students and the rural communities that they live with for a full eight weeks of their internship. Upon graduation, the RITP student-interns are also channeled towards joining NGOs working with marginalized peoples.
- **Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC), Laos.** The mission is to transform Lao society into a holistic learning society through an integrated development process with the participation of all civic sectors in support of Laos becoming a sustainable and livable country. With this, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a key concept which elaborates that learning is a lifelong process, that is, it does not only occur in schools or at school age. Learning should rather be in a variety of places from different people—at school, at home, and in the community. In all projects, the young people are involved first to learn, then to participate, and then

to lead. Youth volunteers who are grouped into teams are trained with basic community development concepts, problem identification and analysis, mobilization skills, and leadership skills. Learning is then applied through school and community activities.

- **Sustainability and Participation thru Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL), Philippines.** As an “Alternative Concept of People’s Capacity Development,” SPELL is a coming together of communities of learning that continuously sharpen thinking on inclusive lifelong learning and quality education in a globalized and climate-challenged 21st century and beyond, resisting the concept of “Human Capital Development.” To contribute to lifelong learning, there is a joint SPELL-Piglas Kababaihan-PINASAMA ECCD knowledge sharing and materials development for pre-school teachers. Lifelong learning from womb to tomb espouses the belief that education walks on 2 legs, everyone is a teacher, and that the focus is on “People’s Capacity Development.” SPELL’s aim is for “lifelong learning towards a culture of solidarity and resistance.”
- **Karen Development Network, Myanmar.** Established in 2004, the Karen Development Network (KDN) is focused on “networking and training, at the leadership and community levels” with an internationally accredited distance-learning Community Management Program at centers in Yangon, Moulmein, Pa’an, Bathein, Toungoo, Lashio, and elsewhere (May Shi Sho 2019). The establishment of KDN initiatives was borne out of the critique of the mainstream, uncritical, and standardized pedagogical methods prevailing in Myanmar. The goal of KDN is to empower the people of Myanmar through popular education. Recently, KDN’s influence, through its popular pedagogy, has facilitated the shaping of Myanmar’s National Youth Policy which promotes the welfare and development of young people. Besides its initiatives in networking, training, and education, KDN has been a key figure in promoting peace as part of its continued nation-building mission.

- **Mae Tao Clinic, Thai-Burma Border.** The Mae Tao Clinic was established in 1989 in Mae Sot, Thailand by Dr. Cynthia Maung. Dr. Maung was among thousands who sought refuge in the borders of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar) when state suppression of the pro-democracy movement reached its peak in 1988. Realizing the need to provide immediate medical attention to the refugees, Dr. Maung started the clinic with makeshift facilities and near nil resources along with a handful of volunteers comprised of both medical practitioners and non-practitioners.

The Mae Tao Clinic has also been instrumental in the formation of two other civic organizations: (1) the Burma Children Medical Fund (2006) to address the needs of patients on the Thai-Burma border requiring surgery that was unavailable at local clinics or hospitals; and (2) the Burma Medical Association (1991) which has been a leading proponent in health care policy development and capacity building towards the provision of quality health service in the ethnic areas of Burma.

Mae Tao Clinic, with its partner organizations and support groups, including individual and institutional volunteers, are guided by a common vision and goal of providing primary health care and quality health services, as well as education and social protection to the vulnerable and displaced people living in the borders. They also continue to strive for the long-term and larger vision for all “people of Burma to have access to quality, equitable and affordable health care, education and protection in respect of all human rights” (Nang and Naw 2019).

- **The Bakwit School of the Save Our Schools Network, Philippines.** The Save Our Schools Network is an alliance of child-focused non-government organizations, church-based groups, and other stakeholders advocating for indigenous children’s right to education. Since the establishment of alternative tribal schools in the 1980’s, Lumad students and faculty have instituted the Bakwit School in Metro Manila

as the highest expression of children's resistance against attacks on Lumad education. Due to the worsening political conditions in Mindanao, the Bakwit School returned to Metro Manila to allow Lumad children to exercise their right to education.

Cultural Alternative Practices

- **Asian Movement for Peoples' Peace and Progress (AMP3).** Across Southeast Asia, musicians are using their music to raise public awareness on their sectoral and community issues and to influence public perception and social policy. The Asian Music for Peoples' Peace and Progress (aMP3), a loose network of alternative and socially engaged musicians, has started to work together to project issues of development in Southeast Asia. A brief video production provides an overview of the social issues in each social context and describes how music plays a role in presenting a vision of a more just and humane future.
- **Koalisi Seni Indonesia (KSI), Indonesia.** KSI is an NGO that seeks to promote the value of culture and arts in Indonesian society. The formation of this coalition is a result of the call to provide more attention on culture and arts to flourish. While the pursuit of cultural work as a source of livelihood is less recognized as a valuable profession in Indonesia, KSI tries to confront this challenge by implementing initiatives to promote arts and education altogether with the participation of the youth. Various arts and cultural projects are implemented at the regional and local levels. KSI engages the national and local governments through dialogue about the role of arts and culture in social transformation.
- **Sining San Roque of the Save San Roque Alliance, Philippines.** Sining San Roque is an artmaking initiative spearheaded by SIKAD (a multidisciplinary art organization advocating for urban poor rights) alongside Save San Roque Alliance and

KADAMAY to reclaim the people's spaces in Sitio San Roque through art. The urban poor community of Sitio San Roque in Quezon City, Philippines is being forced to move out due to plans of national capitalists to establish a business district in the area. Facing dispossession and aggressive development aggression, the residents of Sitio San Roque assert their demands, their calls, their presence, and most importantly, their right to the city by filling the walls of houses and demolished spaces with art, music, and solidarity between visiting artists and residents of the community.

- **ASEAN SOGIE Caucus' Collective Memory Project.** ASEAN SOGIE Caucus' upcoming project that aims to strengthen LGBTQ+ communities' history of struggle seeks to create inclusive political spaces for LGBTQ+ persons in ASEAN by using cultural strategies for advocacy. This means talking about, creating, and collecting both tangible and intangible cultural material that affirm LGBTQ+ people's lives across the region. These efforts are envisioned to contribute towards developing a collective memory, i.e., a group's cultural narratives centered around a shared identity and its relationship to both an imagined common past and a vision of a common future, which demonstrates that LGBTQ+ people's lives are beautifully and authentically rooted in Southeast Asia's story and heritage.

This project was conceived as a systematic response to the claims of governments that LGBTQ+ people's lives are contrary to our culture, or that our lives are influenced by "dangerous western values." Unfortunately, the work of mainstream LGBTQ+ activists to seriously engage in this at a regional level has been lacking. The goals, therefore, are two-fold: to consolidate a collective memory of LGBTQ+ human rights defenders and their communities into an instrument of political transformation; and to increase transnational collaborative actions done by grassroots LGBTQ+ human rights defenders in Southeast Asia.

Alternative Development Frameworks

- **Freedom from Debt Coalition, Philippines.** For over seven decades, the Philippines has been an industry-less, agriculture-less, jobless, and future-less economy. It is unequal, mal-developed, and unsustainable. It is thus imperative that the nation's development strategy be overhauled and an alternative blueprint for a People's Economy adopted and implemented. There are three compelling reasons: first, to arrest an industry-less, agriculture-less, and jobless growth pattern; second, to save and renew the environment for the sake of the present and future generations, and third, to empower the people in shaping an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable Philippines. The Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), as the longest debt watchdog and social movement in developing an alternative economy, has been at the forefront in successfully campaigning for policy alternatives that led to influencing more than five administrations since Marcos downfall, in adopting pro-people economic and fiscal policies.
- **Food Systems as the Main Driver of Climate Emergency (Proposed by Dr. Teodoro Mendoza, Professor, University of the Philippines Los Baños), Philippines.** The "food systems" concept is the main driver of climate crisis, contributing up to 56 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. Across the value chain, the food systems become the major emitter of greenhouse gases. What can be done to alter this unfortunate reality? First, on the demand side, a consumption-led greening of food systems requires consuming less meat and minimizing food wastes. Second, on producing food: accelerate the adoption of regenerative agroecology-based organic agriculture systems. Third, adopting an innovative paradigm shift from food security to health security—from "financesurance" to "healthsurance," from financial banking to health banking, from measuring yield per acre to health per acre. Fourth, re-engineering agri-food systems into agroecotourism as a way of attracting farm visitors, tourist-enthusiasts and attracting human interests and investments flows to the rural areas.

Finally, there is an urgent need to expedite the shift from capital and resource intensive (land, water, energy, inputs) to an innovative ecological-carbon emission-soil erosion-water consumption tax to finance the transition and conversion process to restorative, regenerative, and vibrant agroecology-based organic agriculture and food systems.

- **Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP–Asia).** Addressing poverty and inequality in the Philippines has consistently been in the government’s development agenda. Yet for decades, despite poverty-reduction programs, the number of people in precarious living condition has remained high without regular jobs or livelihoods, receiving poverty-level incomes, hungry, lacking access to essential social services, and without social security in times of contingencies. Vulnerable groups have long been struggling to break free from intergenerational poverty, get protection from falling into poverty, and realize their right to a life of dignity. Moreover, they can be vulnerable to the harmful impacts of continuing global economic and ecological crises.

Together with other human rights and social justice activists, marginalized groups in the country believe that pursuing transformative social protection can be a tool for gaining political, social, and economic power to change their lives and achieve social justice—from poverty and exclusion to a life of dignity for all. Since 2010, NTSP–Asia, a movement campaigning for a life of dignity, has worked for claiming peoples’ rights, including creation of political spaces that will guarantee their participation in government’s decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The fourteen-year experience of engagement with the official ASEAN process has taught civil society movements in Southeast Asia valuable lessons that should guide their future trajectories. Disappointments, rejections, and disillusionments should now be a thing of the past

and chalked up to experience. But the real challenge facing regional networks like ACSC/APF today lies outside and beyond the established ASEAN process and instead be firmly linked and tightly interconnected with grassroots initiatives and the creative practices of real peoples struggling to carve a better and more dignified life for their families and communities and for the future.

The case studies so far documented have been primarily guided by the principles of solidarity, collectivism, social equality, cooperation, mutual benefit, and the commons. They are also mindful of the judicious and responsible use of human and natural resources and the need for peaceful and harmonious relationship with other peoples and with nature and the environment.

We need to move beyond merely engaging the state and the state-led regional bodies and discarding the illusion that the political oligarchs and their allies in the corporate world will listen to the demands of the marginalized and deprived sectors. We have seen that hope disappear in the mists of indifference, apathy, and outright resistance to meaningful and lasting change.

In many ways, the agenda for an alternative peoples' regional integration based on the alternative practices on the ground is a pioneering effort. It is a long-term vision that cannot be accomplished overnight. It will take years of perseverance and commitment to realize an alternative regional system and implement it.

Finally, we need to trust in the collective wisdom and resilience of our peoples and their ability to overcome all obstacles, traits forged through decades of solidarities that interrogate, reach beyond, and even break boundaries. ■

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge the invaluable support and cooperation extended to the Program on Alternative Development, UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies in undertaking the field research, documentation, and fulfilling the logistical requirements of the project on researching and documenting alternative practices in Southeast Asia by the following partners:

- 11.11.11–Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement
- Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD)–Terre Solidaire
- Department of Community Development, UP College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD)
- Focus on the Global South (Focus)
- Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD)
- Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) Philippines
- Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia (KPRI)
- K'dadalak Sulimutuk Institute (KSI), Timor Leste
- People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF), Thailand
- Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA)

Appendix

ACSC/APF 2019 Resolution on Alternative Regional Integration for Southeast Asian Peoples

Whereas, the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) has been engaging with the ASEAN official process since 2005, in the process presenting ASEAN leaders with annual statements that reflect Southeast Asian peoples' issues, concerns, and recommendations covering political, economic, social and cultural dimensions;

Whereas, an internal ACSC/APF Ten-Year Review (2005-2015), however, 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";

Whereas, the same internal review concluded that ten years of engagement with the official ASEAN process have been regularly defined by a "prevailing silence and lack of attention and response to the observations and recommendations raised in all previous ACSC/APF Statements."

Whereas, the ACSC/APF 2016 Timor Leste Statement stated that "ASEAN civil society remain 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";

Whereas, a press release issued by the ACSC/APF Co-Chairs at 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 government .. [and of] ASEAN governments' lack of recognition of civil society as a critical stakeholder";

Whereas, the ACSC-APF Statement on 8 Aug 2017 on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN, argued that the “many years” of “critical engagement” with ASEAN have resulted “in minimal outcomes in terms of the substantive improvement in the lives of our people”;

Whereas, the final statement of ACSC/APF on 13 November 2017 stated that “years of our critical engagement with ASEAN have not contributed in any substantive improvements in the state of our peoples’ lives and the environment” and that “issues and concerns raised by civil society, especially ACSC/APF continue to be ignored”;

Whereas, the same 13 November 2017 statement of ACSC/APF pointed that the “lack of meaningful dialogue, absence of opportunities for interface with officials, and inaction over the draft terms of reference on government-nongovernment relations evidence the shrinking space for civil society to effectively shape the agenda and policies of ASEAN and their respective governments”;

Whereas, the 2015 ACSC/APF statement asserts that “engagement with the Asean process is...anchored on a critique and rejection of deregulation, privatisation, government and corporate-led trade and investment policies that breed greater inequalities, accelerate marginalization and exploitation, and inhibit peace, democracy, development, and social progress in the region.”

Whereas, the 13 November 2017 ACSC/APF statement further noted that ASEAN continues to foster a regional integration model based on a “dominant development narrative that has bred economic, social and environmental crises, including extreme inequalities, extensive human rights violations, situations of conflict and violence, and wanton exploitation of natural resources that are overwhelming the region’s ecosystems”;

Whereas, the 13 November 2017 ACSC/APF Final statement argues that “the case for a radical transformation of ASEAN is irrefutable” and that “participants to the ACSC/APF 2017 firmly believe that such transformation will require taking decisive steps to ensure equitable distribution and sustainable use of natural resources, realize the full

gamut of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for all peoples, and to reestablish itself along the principles of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, and friendship among nations”;

Whereas, the 13 November 2017 Statement concluded that “to this end, the ACSC/APF shall develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on greater people to people interactions that will establish, expand and strengthen a new peoples’ regional integration process based on the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region’s societies;”

Whereas, the 4 November 2018 Statement recommended that ACSC/APF “undertake a collection of grassroots case studies of community-based projects on the ground of local people taking action in building an Alternative Peoples’ Economy towards an Alternative Regionalism;”

Whereas, Southeast Asian peoples’ grassroots communities, popular organizations, civil society organizations, and social movements have, for many years, been engaged in alternative, heterodox, and non-mainstream practices that encompass economic, political, social, and cultural aspects that directly address the issues and concerns of workers, the peasantry, urban poor, fisherfolk, women, youth/children, LGBTQ+ community, indigenous peoples, migrants, older persons, employees, professionals, students and persons with disabilities;

Whereas, ACSC/APF, as the region’s primary network of civil society organizations, social movements, and popular organizations, is independent and autonomous of both the state and corporate business interests;

Be it therefore be resolved that, in order to overcome and address the frustration and disappointment at the results of the 13-year engagement with the official ASEAN process, the ACSC/APF shall develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on people-to-people interactions rather than state-to-state relations or purely market-oriented interactions.

Be it further resolved that, to lead the way forward to greater participation by Southeast Asian peoples in cross-border interactions and undertakings, this new vision shall lead to the establishment of a new peoples' regional integration process.

Be it further resolved that, as a preliminary starting point, the new Southeast Asian peoples' regional integration process shall be based on, among others, the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region's societies.

Be it further resolved that, to show good faith on the part of Southeast Asian civil society movements, the engagement with the official ASEAN process shall continue and will complement the process of building a new peoples' regional integration process.

ADOPTED, 12 SEPTEMBER 2019
ASEAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE/ASEAN PEOPLES'
FORUM (ACSC/APF)
CONVERGENCE SPACE ON LIFE WITH DIGNITY
RANGSIT, PATHUM THANI, THAILAND

ADOPTED, AUGUST 2019
PHILIPPINE PROCESS, ACSC/APF
QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES

References

- Asean Civil Society Conference/Asean Peoples' Forum. 2015. "Reclaiming the ASEAN Community for the People." ACSC/APF Statement, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- . 2016a. "Expanding Peoples' Solidarity for a Just and Inclusive ASEAN Community." ACSC/APF Statement, Dili, Timor Leste.
- . 2016b. "A Successful ASEAN Only Possible if Civil Society Taken Seriously." ACSC/APF Co-Chairs' Press Release, Dili, Timor Leste.
- . 2017. "Beyond Boundaries: Strengthening Peoples' Solidarities for a Just, Equitable, and Humane Southeast Asia." ACSC/APF Statement, November 11–14, 2017, Quezon City, Philippines.
- . 2018. "Empowering Peoples' Solidarity Against All Forms of Discrimination." ACSC/APF Statement, November 2–4, 2018, Singapore.
- . 2019a. "ACSC/APF Draft Resolution on Alternative Regional Integration for Southeast Asian Peoples." ACSC/APF Draft Resolution, September 9–11, 2019, Rangsit, Thailand.
- . 2019b. "Advancing Peoples' Movements for Justice, Peace, Equality, Sustainability and Democracy in Southeast Asia." ACSC/APF Statement, September 9–11, 2019, Rangsit, Thailand.
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations. 2007. "Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations." Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- . 2012. "Guidelines on Accreditation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)." Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. 2015. "Guidelines on the AICHR's Relations with Civil Society Organizations." February 11, 2015. Jakarta: ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights.

- Gerard, Kelly. 2014. "ASEAN and Civil Society Activities in 'Created Spaces': The Limits of Liberty." *The Pacific Review* 27, no. 2: 265–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2014.882395>.
- Ichiyo, Muto, Eduardo C. Tadem, and M.P. Parameswaran. 1997. "Preface." In *IADEA: Integrating Alternative Development Efforts in Asia*. Hong Kong: ARENA Press.
- Jezard, Adam. 2018. "Who and What Is 'Civil Society'?" World Economic Forum, April 23, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/what-is-civil-society/>.
- Kartini, Erni. 2019. "Serikat Petani for Humanity, Infinity, and Justice." Presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples' Movements in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, October 22–24, 2019.
- Kridsakorn Silarak. 2019. "Peoples vs. Pak Mun Dam: A Fisherfolk Movement for Justice." Presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples' Movements in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, October 22–24, 2019.
- Lopa, Consuelo Katrina A. 2016. "South East Asia Peoples' Engagement Towards a People-Centered ASEAN: A Ten-Year Review of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) 2005–2015." Unpublished typescript.
- May Shi Sho. 2019. "Popular Pedagogy and Nation-Building: The Case of Karen Development Network." Presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples' Movements in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, October 22–24, 2019.
- Mushakoji, Kinhide. 2013. "Identity Politics in the Developmentalist States of East Asia: The Role of Diaspora Communities in the Growth of Civil Societies." *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 49, no. 1: 129–38.
- Nang Snow and Naw Gold Rain. 2019. "Healing at the Border: Developing the Mae Tao Clinic." Presentation at the 2nd

International Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples' Movements in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, October 22–24, 2019.

Nesadurai, Helen E. S. 2012. "The ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF) as Authentic Social Forum: Regional Civil Society Networking for an Alternative Regionalism." In *Routledge Handbook of Asian Regionalism*, edited by Mark Beeson and Richard Stubbs, 166–76. London and New York: Routledge.

Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sophorth, Touch. 2019. "Workers' Information Center: Ensuring Decent Work, Empowering Women Garment Workers." Presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Alternatives: Building Peoples' Movements in Southeast Asia, Quezon City, Philippines, October 22–24, 2019.

Tadem, Eduardo C. 2017. "ASEAN Ignores Civil Society... Again." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 4, 2017. <http://opinion.inquirer.net/109206/asean-ignores-civil-society>.

Tomlinson, Brian. 2013. "Annex 1: NGOs and CSOs: A Note on Terminology." In *Working with Civil Society in Foreign Aid: Possibilities for South-South Cooperation?*, 123–25. Beijing: United Nations Development Programme.

World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health. 2007. "Civil Society Report." Geneva: World Health Organization.

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Editor-in-Chief and the Program Editors ensure that the discussion papers contain research findings on issues that are aligned with the core agenda of the research programs under the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

The responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief and the Program Editors is towards high standards of scholarship, the generation of new knowledge that can be utilized for the good of the public, and the dissemination of such information.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PROGRAM EDITORS

■ EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING CLUSTER

Dina S. Ocampo
Education Research Program

Fernando DLC. Paragas
Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform

Marie Therese Angeline P. Bustos
Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Program

Fidel R. Nemenzo
Jalton G. Taguibao
Program on Data Science for Public Policy

■ DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

Karl Robert L. Jandoc
Annette O. Pelkmans-Balaoing
Program on Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains for Change

Antoinette R. Raquiza
Maria Dulce F. Natividad
Political Economy Program

Eduardo C. Tadem
Karl Arvin F. Hapal
Program on Alternative Development

Antonio Miguel L. Dans
Jose Rafael A. Marfori
Program on Health Systems Development

■ SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL STUDIES CLUSTER

Maria Ela L. Atienza
Jorge V. Tigno
Program on Social and Political Change

Macrina A. Morados
Islamic Studies Program

Herman Joseph S. Kraft
Aries A. Arugay
Strategic Studies Program

Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran
Frances Antoinette C. Cruz
Decolonial Studies Program

■ LOCAL-REGIONAL STUDIES NETWORK

Leah E. Abayao
Cordillera Studies Center
University of the Philippines Baguio

Belinda F. Espiritu
Central Visayas Studies Center
University of the Philippines Cebu

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES Clarisse C. Culla • Ace Vincent P. Molo
COPYEDITOR Virna Liza O. Guaño **LAYOUT ARTIST** Zylkyka F. Gendraule

The UP CIDS Discussion Paper Series is published quarterly by the
University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

Editorial Office: Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue,
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Telephone: 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 68 / 3435-9283 • **Telefax:** 8426-0955

Email: cids@up.edu.ph / cidspublications@up.edu.ph

THE PROGRAM

The **Program on Alternative Development (AltDev)** aims to look at paradigms, policies, practices, and projects that are largely marginalized and excluded from the mainstream. Because they challenge dominant modes, they do not figure prominently in the national and international discourse. AltDev aims to bring these alternatives out of the margins and into the mainstream to level the playing field so that they may be regarded on an equal footing with dominant discourses and thus offer alternatives to the existing system.

ABOUT UP CIDS

Established in 1985 by UP President Edgardo Angara, the **UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS)** is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni
Magsaysay Avenue, University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Telephone: 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268 / 3435-9283 • Telefax: 8426-0955
Email: cids@up.edu.ph / cidspublications@up.edu.ph
Website: cids.up.edu.ph