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**ORIENTING ASEAN TOWARDS ITS PEOPLE:
ENABLING ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL NGOS**

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Abstract

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil-society organisations and grassroots groups are a growing phenomenon across Southeast Asia. Many of these organisations fill in gaps and provide services that are not otherwise met by local authorities and governments; others purport to be the voice of the marginalised, disempowered or discriminated. There is a broad spectrum of these organisations present in Southeast Asia – from the home-grown entity that scavenges funds from myriad sources and volunteers; to large, international establishments with substantial regular funding, full-time staff and transnational networks and influence. ASEAN's history in dealing with NGOs is chequered. Most affiliated organisations are government-owned or government-influenced organisations (GONGOs) who support ASEAN's goals and legitimise its policies. This paper proposes that ASEAN should be more supportive of local ground-up organisations so that the regional body can act upon its goal of nurturing caring, equitable and inclusive communities with an empowered civil society, as well as fulfil its commitment to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. An NGO Matrix that can be used as a tool to plot organisation types could help identify groups that should get the most support. As a demonstrative example, the tool has been applied to several environmental organisations currently active in South Malaysia.

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Introduction

The global proliferation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil-society organisations (CSOs) and grassroots groups is especially significant in Asia.¹ In Southeast Asia, they provide services and social, environmental or other support that are not otherwise met by local authorities and governments; others purport to be the voice of the marginalised, disempowered or discriminated. There is a broad spectrum of these organisations present in Southeast Asia – from the home-grown entity that scavenges funds from myriad sources and volunteers; to large, international establishments with substantial regular funding, full-time staff and transnational networks and influence. Although ASEAN has committed to a people-oriented, inclusive community where civil society is empowered, its history in dealing with NGOs is chequered. In light of varied reservations about engaging with certain types of NGOs, and using environmental organisations as an illustration, this paper suggests that ASEAN should actively involve and collaborate with home-grown grassroots organisations so that it can effectively act upon its goal of nurturing caring, equitable communities, and fulfil its commitment to achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

NGOs in Southeast Asia

The number of NGOs and CSOs, as well as grassroots groups worldwide has grown vastly over past decades. In general, these organisations are defined by their existence for an altruistic cause, use of volunteers and its non-profit status. The World Bank defines NGOs as “non-profit organisations independent of the government” that are value-based and “depend in whole or in part on charitable donations and voluntary service”.² Non-state actor is a term often used in governance and international relations’ circles to refer to these types of organisations and is an important characterisation of an NGO as it emphasises the distinction between these ground-up initiatives and a nation’s government.

Some NGOs purport to be the voice of the marginalised, disempowered and discriminated. In some cases, the discrimination the NGOs rally against is said to come from the state and/or those in authority. Grassroots organisations and CSOs tend to emerge as citizen groups that seek to provide services and fill these gaps are not otherwise met by local authorities or governments. In this paper, all such ground-up local organisations are referred to collectively as NGOs.

¹ Gerard Clarke. “Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Politics in the Developing World” *Political Studies* (1998): 36-52.

² Carmen Malena. *Working with NGOs: a Practical Guide to Operational Collaboration between the World Bank and Nongovernmental Organizations*. Washington, DC: World Bank. 1995, accessed 12 September 2016, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/814581468739240860/Working-with-NGOs-a-practical-guide-to-operational-collaboration-between-the-World-Bank-and-nongovernmental-organizations>

In Southeast Asia, a recent phenomenon is the birth of government-owned or government-influenced NGOs (GONGOs), which are created to further the agenda of the ruling power³ or counter claims by media savvy local or international NGOs.⁴ At yet another extreme are international non-governmental organisations (INGOs); large transboundary organisations with branches or representatives in multiple locations, which apply a systematic approach to issues prevalent in their operational locations. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) simply identifies INGOs as any organisation that is created without an inter-governmental agreement.⁵ INGOs tend to be generously and consistently funded and have a phalanx of paid staff to support their administrative and other needs. INGOs working in Southeast Asia range from the humanitarian – such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), to the environmental – such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) or the World Conservation Society (WCS).

ASEAN Engagement with NGOs

ASEAN cites its Track 2 processes as a bridge between Track 1 and 3 and an illustration of how civil society is involved in regional institutional-building⁶ and more inclusive political structures.⁷ Initial activities under these processes include the ASEAN-ISIS network of think tank events, such as the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) that took place between 2002 and 2009. Although this process was described as "people-empowering"⁸ and lauded as an opportunity for debate and discussion between the states and its citizens; scholars and civil society groups later lamented its top-down control of NGOs and CSOs participation in its meetings. Most of these forums have been dominated by state-sponsored or state-supported think tanks, GONGOs, professional bodies and organisations that are eligible for ASEAN NGO affiliation status.^{9 10 11} NGOs and CSOs are only deemed eligible for affiliation if all 10 member states approve of their membership and if the organisation's goals and purposes are in line with that of ASEAN's.

³ Martin Mulligan, "On the Trail of Malaysia's Weirdest Animal: The GONGO," *The Round Table* 96(391) (2007): 429-434, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/00358530701565339.

⁴ Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

⁵ "Union of International Associations", <http://www.uia.org/fag/yb4>, accessed 11 September 2016.

⁶ See Seng Tan, "NGOs in Conflict Management in Southeast Asia," *International Peacekeeping* 12(1) (2005): 49-66, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/1353331042000286559.

⁷ Kelly Gerard, "From the ASEAN People's Assembly to the ASEAN Civil Society Conference: the Boundaries of Civil Society Advocacy," *Contemporary Politics* 19(4) (2013): 411-426, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13569775.2013.835113

⁸ Cabellero-Anthony, cited in Kelly Gerard, "From the ASEAN People's Assembly to the ASEAN Civil Society Conference: the Boundaries of Civil Society Advocacy," *Contemporary Politics* 19(4) (2013): 411, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13569775.2013.835113

⁹ See Seng Tan, "NGOs in Conflict Management in Southeast Asia," *International Peacekeeping* 12(1) (2005): 49-66, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/1353331042000286559.

¹⁰ Kelly Gerard, "Explaining ASEAN's Engagement of Civil Society in Policy-making: Smoke and Mirrors," *Globalizations* 12(3) (2015): 365-382, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14747731.2015.1016304

¹¹ Amitav Acharya, "Democratisation and the Prospects for Participatory Regionalism in Southeast Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 24(2) (2003):375-390, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/0143659032000074646.

Critics of the Track 2 process highlight the secrecy of ASEAN policy deliberations.¹² NGOs are often consulted at the beginning of a policy cycle when general ideas are required, but are left out for the remainder of the process and at the decision-making stage.¹³ Otherwise, NGOs are consulted at the end of the policy cycle as a public relations exercise in a one-way information dissemination session, rather than as engagement for input.¹⁴ Raustiala¹⁵ suggests that these NGO roles are mere window-dressing to satisfy vocal public opinion. While the rhetoric surrounding this process depicts civil society engagement, top-down control demonstrates a lack of real inclusivity, governmental appreciation and support for NGOs.¹⁶

The ASEAN Track 3 process involves NGO networks and is seen to be a civil society movement that can rise above the limitations of borders and nationalities. It also purports to be a platform for communities marginalised as a result of institutional systems to come together in discussion and expression of their needs and opinions.¹⁷ This process emerged from a perceived lack of access to critical engagement of government policy. For example, the ASEAN Civil Society Conferences (ACSCs) were organised by the Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA) network. In order to counter the limitations placed on the SAPA events, the ACSC welcomed the entry of any NGO, including GONGOs, which then used their participation to advance state agendas or monitor activist actions.¹⁸ Kraft¹⁹ pointed out that these meetings seemed to focus more on gaining media attention and disseminating information instead of generating new knowledge. There was also a tendency to be deliberately critical of official policy and insist on structural changes, thereby limiting their ability to influence government thought processes. The general reluctance to engage with regional inter-governmental institutions also stemmed from a fear of being co-opted into the mainstream.^{20 21}

¹² Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

¹³ Kal Raustiala, "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997):719-740.

¹⁴ Kelly Gerard, "Explaining ASEAN's Engagement of Civil Society in Policy-making: Smoke and Mirrors," *Globalizations* 12(3) (2015): 365-382, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14747731.2015.1016304

¹⁵ Kal Raustiala, "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997):719-740.

¹⁶ Kelly Gerard, "Explaining ASEAN's Engagement of Civil Society in Policy-making: Smoke and Mirrors," *Globalizations* 12(3) (2015): 365-382, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14747731.2015.1016304

See Seng Tan, "NGOs in Conflict Management in Southeast Asia," *International Peacekeeping* 12(1) (2005): 49-66, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/1353331042000286559.

¹⁷ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

¹⁸ Kelly Gerard, "From the ASEAN People's Assembly to the ASEAN Civil Society Conference: the Boundaries of Civil Society Advocacy," *Contemporary Politics* 19(4) (2013): 411-426, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13569775.2013.835113.

¹⁹ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

²⁰ See Seng Tan, "Non-official Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: "Civil Society" or "Civil Service"?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27(3) (2005): 370-87.

²¹ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

Reasons for Reservations

Thus, it is clear that while ASEAN has institutionalised processes for engagement with NGOs, there is room for improvement. An examination into the reasons for the disenchantment with NGOs could shed light on a possible way forward.

Most of the literature available on ASEAN's reluctance to engage with NGOs revolves around issues of power. Enhanced participation by civil society in governance is seen to diminish the power of the state, democratise governance, and thus undermine official narratives. This is because NGOs develop alternative discourses and shift the balance of power away from institutionalised authorities.²² ²³ ²⁴ Collins describes ASEAN as "an association for the elite",²⁵ in which all decision-making is state-centric and where NGOs' engagement and objectives are preferably decided and controlled by those in authority.

Another point of contention raised by the region's governments is the allegation that NGOs are less than transparent, raising the question of funding sources and the subsequent subversive influence of private, foreign or "Western" agendas.²⁶ ²⁷ While not specifically related to ASEAN, Townsend, Porter and Mawdsley²⁸ likened NGO networks to an evolved form of imperialism; a portrayal that would be an anathema to Southeast Asia's regional body. Yet another common refrain is that NGOs do not represent the broader public interest, add burden to the government and threaten social unity and national interests in the pursuit of their ideals.²⁹ ³⁰

²² Christopher L. Pallas and Anders Uhlin, "Civil Society Influence on International Organizations: Theorizing the State Channel," *Journal of Civil Society* 10(2) (2014): 184-203, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/17448689.2014.921102.

²³ Kal Raustiala, "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 719-740.

²⁴ Francis Kok Wah Loh, "Procedural Democracy, Participatory Democracy and Regional Networking: the Multi-terrain Struggle for Democracy in Southeast Asia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9(1) (2008): 127-141, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14649370701789740.

²⁵ Alan Collins, "A People-Oriented ASEAN: A Door Ajar or Closed for Civil Society Organisations?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30(2) (2008): 313-331, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1355/cs30-2g.

²⁶ David Lewis and Paul Opoku-Mensah, "Moving Forward Research Agendas on International NGOs: Theory, Agency and Context," *Journal of International Development* 18 (2006): 665-675, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1002/jid.1306

²⁷ Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

²⁸ Janet G. Townsend, Gina Porter and Emma Mawdsley, "The Role of the Transnational Community of Non-Government Organizations: Governance or Poverty Reduction?" *Journal of International Development* 14 (2002): 829-839, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1002/jid.928.

²⁹ See Seng Tan, "NGOs in Conflict Management in Southeast Asia," *International Peacekeeping* 12(1) (2005): 49-66, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/1353331042000286559.

³⁰ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

Environmental NGOs

In the case of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), which are the focus of the rest of this paper, there is a dual dilemma of natural resource management and human rights. The former is usually perceived as being under the purview of the government or local authorities, and the latter an invention of Western governments and/or the media.³¹ Increasing numbers of ENGOS have come about in response to the region's pursuit of economic growth and the subsequent mismanagement of shared resources.³² ENGOS often take on a self-appointed watchdog role; actively monitoring natural areas and breaches in regulations; empowering citizens to take ownership and action; and formulating and putting forward environmental policies.^{33 34} In doing so, they promote social transformation and question the priorities and assumptions behind existing policies.³⁵ As environmental issues are usually transboundary in nature, many ENGOS tap into international organisations (IOs) for ideas and proven models of cooperation across borders that can be adopted or adapted in the region.³⁶

Some governments have welcomed this as an indication of increased awareness and promotion of sustainable development, and have tapped on NGOs for their specialised expertise and lobbying abilities with other governments.^{37 38} This transnational activism and organising is used as a way to reach out to or influence other states to comply with environmental regulations and norms. This is especially relevant in cases where there are weak social movements or a lack of access to decision-making channels in the target country.^{39 40 41} In ASEAN, this tool has been used recently in the case of transboundary haze negotiations.

³¹ Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

³² Kelly Gerard, "ASEAN and Civil Society Activities in 'Created Spaces': the Limits of Liberty" *The Pacific Review* 24(2) (2014): 265-287, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/09512748.2014.882395.

³³ JoAnn Fagot Aviel, "Placing Human Rights and Environmental Issues on ASEAN's Agenda: The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 8(2) (2000): 17-34, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/02185370008434168.

³⁴ Raymond Cléménçon, "Economic Integration and the Environment in Southeast Asia: Securing Gains from Open Markets while Preventing Further Environmental Degredation," *Journal of Environment & Development* 6(3) (1997): 317-333.

³⁵ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

³⁶ JoAnn Fagot Aviel, "Placing Human Rights and Environmental Issues on ASEAN's Agenda: The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 8(2) (2000): 17-34, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/02185370008434168.

³⁷ Kal Raustiala, "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 719-740.

³⁸ JoAnn Fagot Aviel, "Placing Human Rights and Environmental Issues on ASEAN's Agenda: The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 8(2) (2000): 17-34, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/02185370008434168.

³⁹ Dominique Caouette, "Going Transnational?: Dynamics and Challenges of Linking Local Claims to Global Advocacy Networks in Southeast Asia," *Pacific Focus* 22(2) (2007): 141-166.

Margi Prideaux, "Wildlife NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators," *Global Policy* 6(4) (2015): 379-388.

⁴⁰ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor," *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

⁴¹ Margi Prideaux, "Wildlife NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators," *Global Policy* 6(4) (2015): 379-388.

The global social justice framework is often used to combine environmental issues with concern for marginalised or indigenous communities and resistance to neoliberal globalisation.⁴² This then invites questions of foreign influence into the cause. Duncan, Farooq and Wimmer⁴³ describe an extremist green agenda, linking the environmental movement in Southeast Asia to militant radical ideology and anarchy. Lovelock⁴⁴ cites the need for international ENGOs to be seen to be fighting for a cause and derive maximum media attention, but this sometimes leads to the use of public protests and thereafter governmental reactions of violations of sovereignty.⁴⁵ ASEAN's long-standing principles of non-interference and gentle consensus style decision-making⁴⁶ are at complete odds with these more confrontational approaches to instigating change.

ASEAN Commitments to Inclusivity

The ASEAN Charter commits to promoting a people-oriented ASEAN in which “all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in and benefit from the processes of ASEAN integration and community-building”.⁴⁷ It reinforces the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, as well as commits to narrowing developmental gaps within ASEAN. Additionally, it alleviates poverty and purports to provide equal access to human development, justice and social welfare. Civil society is mentioned under Article 15 – ASEAN Foundation, wherein the Foundation will collaborate with the business sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders to support ASEAN community building.

The ASEAN Vision 2020 refers to a community of caring societies, where equal access is provided to all “regardless of gender, race, religion, language or social and cultural background”. The document looks towards a civil society that is empowered and where special attention is given to the disadvantaged and marginalised.⁴⁸ In line with the Charter, the ASEAN Foundation is the instrument of choice to address disparities in economic development, poverty and socio-economy. In terms of the environment, the ASEAN Vision 2020 foresees a “clean and green ASEAN with a fully established mechanism for sustainable development to ensure the protection of the region's environment, the sustainability of its natural resources and the high quality of life of its peoples”. The Vision therefore also makes a link between the environment and the well-being of ASEAN citizens.

⁴² Dominique Caouette, “Going Transnational?: Dynamics and Challenges of Linking Local Claims to Global Advocacy Networks in Southeast Asia,” *Pacific Focus* 22(2) (2007): 141-166.

⁴³ William B. Duncan, Umar Farooq and Andreas Wimmer, *Debunking Non-Profit Campaigns: A Policy Study on the Negative (Economic & Social) Implications for Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Deutsches Asienforschungszentrum / Malaysian Palm Oil Council, 2015.

⁴⁴ Brent Lovelock, “A Comparative Study of Environmental NGOs Perspectives of the Tourism Industry and Modes of Action in the South and Southeast Asia and Oceania Regions,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 8(1) (2003): 1-14.

⁴⁵ Margi Prideaux, “Wildlife NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators,” *Global Policy* 6(4) (2015): 379-388.

⁴⁶ Kheng-Lian Koh, “ASEAN Environmental Protection in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development: Convergence versus Divergence?” *Macquarie Journal of International and Comparative Environmental Law* 4(1) (2007): 43-70.

⁴⁷ ASEAN, *The ASEAN Charter*, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2015.

⁴⁸ ASEAN, *ASEAN Vision 2020*, Kuala Lumpur: ASEAN Secretariat, 1997.

Gerard⁴⁹ points out that consulting with and being inclusive of civil society is consistent with ASEAN's rhetoric. However, Collins highlights that engagement is a top-down process and that ASEAN declarations are "high on aspirational rhetoric but low on actual implementation".⁵⁰ ASEAN's institutional structures prevent true engagement with representatives of the people. In the drafting of the ASEAN Charter, Morada concedes that at the end of the day, ASEAN's bureaucrats and diplomats make the last call, and that the drafting process and final wording of the Charter only served to render legitimacy to and strengthen an ASEAN that is essentially state-centric.⁵¹ The Charter did not create a pathway to citizen engagement or institutionalise dialogue channels to connect citizens to ASEAN.⁵²

Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of ASEAN, has often been cited for his comments for the regional body to learn to engage with its people and tap on their willingness to help build an ASEAN community.⁵³ He has also pointed out that NGO advocacy is here to stay. Thus, ASEAN governments will have to learn to adjust, as "the more it happens a gradual immunity will build up and it will become part and parcel of regional relations".⁵⁴ The language of the statement itself conveys the aversion that government officials have towards NGOs; as "immunity" is needed towards the plague of their presence. Pitsuwan's comments also reveal that engaging with the region's citizens was a novel approach to governance in ASEAN at the time.

With the formation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, the importance of engagement with civil society and NGOs was put forward by the ASEAN Eminent Persons Group (EPG). In their report at the 4th Informal Summit, they declared that individuals, groups, businesses and communities should be seen as capable of discussing ASEAN matters with the state as it is their prerogative as much as the governments'.⁵⁵ Loh suggests more dialogue be allowed between these entities.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Kelly Gerard, "Explaining ASEAN's Engagement of Civil Society in Policy-making: Smoke and Mirrors," *Globalizations* 12(3) (2015): 365-382, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14747731.2015.1016304

⁵⁰ Alan Collins, "A People-Oriented ASEAN: A Door Ajar or Closed for Civil Society Organisations?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30(2) (2008): 313-331, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1355/cs30-2g.

⁵¹ Noel Morada, "ASEAN at 40: Prospects for Community Building in Southeast Asia," *Asia-Pacific Review*, 15(1) (2008): 36-55, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439000802134043.

⁵² Melissa Curley, "Human Security's Future in Regional Cooperation and Governance?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 66(5) (2012): 527-541, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/10357718.2011.570242.

⁵³ Kelly Gerard, "From the ASEAN People's Assembly to the ASEAN Civil Society Conference: the Boundaries of Civil Society Advocacy," *Contemporary Politics* 19(4) (2013): 411-426, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13569775.2013.835113.

⁵⁴ Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

⁵⁵ Alan Collins, "A People-Oriented ASEAN: A Door Ajar or Closed for Civil Society Organisations?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30(2) (2008): 313-331, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1355/cs30-2g.

⁵⁶ Francis Kok Wah Loh, "Procedural Democracy, Participatory Democracy and Regional Networking: the Multi-terrain Struggle for Democracy in Southeast Asia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9(1) (2008): 127-141, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/14649370701789740.

It is clear that ASEAN is moving towards more engagement with its people. In his discussion of democratisation in Southeast Asia, Acharya noted the shift from state or regime security to closer involvement of civil society and social movements.⁵⁷ Prominent voices and myriad scholars have pointed out gaps in ASEAN's existing institutional structure and practices that need to be overcome. Doing so would enable ASEAN to be more effective and genuine in its efforts to reach out and provide access to community and grassroots groups. Some ASEAN states have already begun to recognise the importance of NGOs in dealing with socio-economic problems that are beyond the capacity of governments to deal with alone. Tan points out that there is a willingness by those in Tracks 2 and 3 to engage with those who may not seem to be of the same mind as they realise that they cannot achieve their goals without the collaboration of the other.⁵⁸ The rest of this paper puts forward additional reasons to reinforce the shift towards authentic engagement and presents a tool that can be used to assess the potential effectiveness and usefulness of engaging with various types of ENGOs.

Achieving ASEAN Goals through Civil Society Engagement

As part of ASEAN Vision 2025, there was a commitment to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals through the ASEAN Community Blueprints. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint⁵⁹ is particularly relevant to matters of inclusiveness and sustainable development, therein taking into consideration environmental and local community issues. Principles of inclusivity are evident in the blueprint in sections A to C, which look at "Human Development" and "Social Welfare & Protection" and "Social Justice". Section D looks at "Environmental Sustainability" and Section E.4 looks specifically at "Engagement with the Community". However, while Section E.4 stresses a people-oriented ASEAN, it again returns to the idea of engaging with only ASEAN-affiliated NGOs through the ASEAN Social Forum and ACSC programmes. ASEAN needs to reach beyond its affiliated NGOs, in order for it to become truly inclusive and be able to meet the rest of its proclaimed goals in the blueprint.

In their discussion of the ASEAN Sustainability Framework, Koh and Robinson⁶⁰ mentioned that limitations of the agreements taken in the name of environmental sustainability are due partly to a lack of expertise, information, data, funding and organisational support, as well as inadequate information due to insufficient monitoring and surveillance mechanisms. While they recognise some achievements in ASEAN regional environmental governance, Cléménçon points out that there are

⁵⁷ Amitav Acharya, "Democratisation and the Prospects for Participatory Regionalism in Southeast Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 24(2) (2003):375-390, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/0143659032000074646.

⁵⁸ See Seng Tan, "NGOs in Conflict Management in Southeast Asia," *International Peacekeeping* 12(1) (2005): 49-66, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/1353331042000286559.

⁵⁹ ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, October 2014

⁶⁰ Koh Kheng Lian and Nicholas A. Robinson, "Regional Environmental Governance: Examining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Model." in *Global Environmental Governance: Options & Opportunities*, edited by Daniel C. Esty and Maria H. Ivanova, 1-21. Connecticut: Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, 2002. Accessed 28 July 2016, <http://environment.yale.edu/publication-series/documents/downloads/h-n/koh.pdf>.

limited opportunities for scientists to advise governments on environmental issues. He opines that ASEAN tends to seek advice only from scientists already in agreement with the government.⁶¹ Similarly, Pallas and Uhlin also advocate for engagement with non-state actors who have expertise that the state lacks.⁶²

Environmental issues are usually transregional in nature, and environmental security for one member of ASEAN is dependent on that of the other members. Thus, this requires more flexibility in approaches than state actors can often manage. NGOs are in an ideal position to overcome national governmental secrecy and encourage an exchange of information, so as to achieve regional goals of sustainable development.⁶³ These transboundary approaches would be more productive and cost-effective in influencing public attitudes and subsequently, actions of neighbouring governments. NGOs are able to manoeuvre around diplomatic restrictions and lobby other ASEAN member states, so as to monitor commitments, minimise ratification risks and facilitate signalling between governments and constituents.⁶⁴ Engaging with NGOs on environmental matters would therefore nurture a parallel diplomacy similar to that for humanitarian issues.⁶⁵

ASEAN's Existing Engagement with ENGOS

ASEAN does engage with ENGOS, but as outlined earlier, many of those affiliated with ASEAN are GONGOS and organisations that support the top-down interests of the regional body. There are instances where international environmental organisations such as WWF and WCS have engaged with ASEAN or its member states, such as in the *Heart of Borneo* and *Coral Triangle* initiatives. However, there seems to be less willingness to engage with smaller, home-grown, less publicity-inclined grassroots and community environmental groups. The hesitation towards this has been explained in the previous section, but Howell and Pierce point out that authentic civil society movements can only come from within and revolves around specific historic, social and cultural contexts. Forsaking a smaller ground-up movement for an internationally media savvy organisation might actually subject ASEAN to unwanted influence and intervention by umbrella environmental

⁶¹ Raymond Cléménçon, "Economic Integration and the Environment in Southeast Asia: Securing Gains from Open Markets while Preventing Further Environmental Degredation," *Journal of Environment & Development* 6(3) (1997): 317-333.

⁶² Christopher L. Pallas and Anders Uhlin, "Civil Society Influence on International Organizations: Theorizing the State Channel," *Journal of Civil Society* 10(2) (2014): 184-203, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/17448689.2014.921102.

⁶³ JoAnn Fagot Aviel, "Placing Human Rights and Environmental Issues on ASEAN's Agenda: The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 8(2) (2000): 17-34, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/02185370008434168.

⁶⁴ Kal Raustiala, "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 719-740.

⁶⁵ See Seng Tan, "Non-official Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: "Civil Society" or "Civil Service"?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27(3) (2005): 370-87.

organisations that make decisions and strategic plans offshore.^{66 67} Acharya advocates strategies that bring together new ideas and local beliefs and practices, rather than an approach that enforces foreign ideas and concepts on a local or regional setting. This is especially since the latter is often implemented through sheer pressure and shaming.⁶⁸

Reasons for Supporting the Local

Grassroots and local community organisations or home-grown NGOs are often limited by a lack of resources and financing. Coupled with a reliance on volunteers, there are limits to the amount of effort that can be put into addressing the concerns of the organisation. Reimann traces the growth of NGOs to the availability of funds from international organisations such as the UN and its affiliates, the European Union and the World Food Program, just to name a few. These funds are often made available when there is a goal congruence, which might include the promotion of new forms of governance in the developing world.⁶⁹ This harks back to ASEAN fears of foreign influence, modern imperialism and subversive attempts to decentralise democracy. Koch, Dreher, Nuenkamp and Thiele's study of NGO aid allocations confirm these fears as they report that funders select recipient NGOs based on common traits related to religion or colonial history, and continue to contribute to past recipients when there are professed predetermined goals (set by these organisations) that are seen to have been achieved.⁷⁰ On the other hand, if ASEAN were able to provide financial and other support to local NGOs, they would no longer need to rely on foreign entities that might have dubious ulterior motives for their generosity.

Gerard points out that a sense of ownership among ASEAN citizens is almost non-existent,⁷¹ despite both Track 2 and 3 efforts to nurture a cohesive ASEAN Community spirit. Aviel notes that in order for ASEAN to survive, its people, and not just government officials or private enterprises, have to be involved in building a genuine regional community spirit.⁷² Hobson cites Singapore as an example where NGO volunteers are motivated by a desire to forge stronger feelings of belonging.⁷³ The growth of environmental consciousness across Southeast Asia stems largely from an increasingly Western-

⁶⁶ Jude Howard and Jenny Pearce, "Civil Society: Technical Instrument or Social Force for Change?" in *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change*, edited by David Lewis and Tina Wallace, Colorado: Kumarian Press, 2000.

⁶⁷ Brent Lovelock, "A Comparative Study of Environmental NGOs Perspectives of the Tourism Industry and Modes of Action in the South and Southeast Asia and Oceania Regions," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 8(1) (2003): 1-14.

⁶⁸ Melissa Curley, "Human Security's Future in Regional Cooperation and Governance?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 66(5) (2012): 527-541, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/10357718.2011.570242.

⁶⁹ Kim D. Reimann, "A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs," *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006): 45-67.

⁷⁰ Dirk-Jan Koch, Axel Dreher, Peter Nunnenkamp and Rainer Thiele, "Keeping a Low Profile: What Determines the Allocation of Aid by Non-Governmental Organisations?" *World Development* 37(5) (2009): 902-918. Accessed 28 July 2016 doi: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.09.004.

⁷¹ Kelly Gerard, "ASEAN and Civil Society Activities in 'Created Spaces': the Limits of Liberty" *The Pacific Review* 24(2) (2014): 265-287, accessed 8 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/09512748.2014.882395.

⁷² Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

⁷³ Kersty Hobson, "Considering 'Green' Practices: NGOs and Singapore's Emergent Environmental-Political Landscape" *SOJOURN* 20(2) (2005): 155-176.

educated middle class, as well as in response to livelihood issues and survival of the poor.⁷⁴ These driving forces amass public support for causes that influence public opinion, underline the importance of stakeholder legitimacy and win specific action from governments or key decision-makers by generating adverse public reaction to policy choices. It is therefore important for ASEAN to harness these forces from within for its own benefit.

Adaptation towards Hybrid Regimes

While Clarke⁷⁵ insists that NGO action is intrinsically political, he concedes that focusing on macro-political issues is likely to benefit large sectors of the poor and marginalised. NGOs that originate in the developing world, such as Southeast Asia, do not function like special interest or pressure groups in the global north. They exert more effort into public education and industry negotiation than lobbying politicians and public servants.^{76 77} They have also become less dependent on foreign NGOs and give priority to networking at local and regional levels.⁷⁸ Clarke suggests that the fluidity of developing world NGOs enables them to see that formal democracy is an insufficient condition for long-term social transformation. This is a neat segue for ASEAN to adapt its approaches to NGO engagement while keeping to its principles of sovereignty and non-interference; the regional body can continue to develop its own (i.e. non-Western) approaches to civil society support without having to compromise the ideals that it stands for.

Should ASEAN become more supportive of home-grown NGOs, the latter could be encouraged to work within the system and not against it. Prideaux states that many NGOs already adhere to local norms and codes of conduct and participate willingly in the traditional vertical governance structure.⁷⁹ Hobson's illustration of environmental NGOs in Singapore are models of apolitical locally-initiated groups that work both "inside" and "outside" the government; they are able to encourage active citizen action while staying within the boundaries set by the government.⁸⁰ Fisher's application of Foucault's views of power, empowerment and the Other illustrate that NGOs can participate from within the existing social order, yet contribute to social restructuring (through resistance to power) and humanise structural adjustment policies, as well as help citizens cope with projects or decisions made by those

⁷⁴ Brent Lovelock, "A Comparative Study of Environmental NGOs Perspectives of the Tourism Industry and Modes of Action in the South and Southeast Asia and Oceania Regions," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 8(1) (2003): 1-14.

⁷⁵ Gerard Clarke. "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Politics in the Developing World" *Political Studies* (1998): 36-52.

⁷⁶ Brent Lovelock, "A Comparative Study of Environmental NGOs Perspectives of the Tourism Industry and Modes of Action in the South and Southeast Asia and Oceania Regions," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 8(1) (2003): 1-14.

⁷⁷ Gerard Clarke. "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Politics in the Developing World" *Political Studies* (1998): 36-52.

⁷⁸ Joann Fagot Aviel, "The Growing Role of NGOs in ASEAN," *Asia-Pacific Review* 6(2) (1999): 78-92, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/13439009908720018.

⁷⁹ Margi Prideaux, "Wildlife NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators," *Global Policy* 6(4) (2015): 379-388.

⁸⁰ Kersty Hobson, "Considering "Green" Practices: NGOs and Singapore's Emergent Environmental-Political Landscape" *SOJOURN* 20(2) (2005): 155-176.

in authority.⁸¹ Jayasuria and Rodan describe democratic spaces created through independent, collective action.⁸² Within these spaces, movements and action are mobilised without the need for approval or sanction of governmental authorities. Instead, due to their informality, they function to provide services within lawful means. This illustration shows that ASEAN can in fact “govern” NGOs without being confrontational by creating a space for civil society action and participation that evolves from a hybrid regime that departs from Western concepts of unbridled democracy and melds itself with ASEAN principles and practices.

On a practical level, researchers have suggested that local NGOs be roped in to help implement government policies.^{83 84} While this might seem like a suggestion to co-opt NGOs into government agenda (an expressed fear of Track 3 participants^{85 86}), the reality is that while civil society needs to remain autonomous from the state (and not become GONGOs), freedom of expression and cohesive action for grassroots concerns actually requires at least tacit support from the state in order to be effective and politically influential.⁸⁷ To prevent complete assimilation by the state, however, the NGOs need to maintain their watchdog function, a role that many already provide in ASEAN. The regional body needs to recognise the usefulness of NGOs in this role, and provide them with complete access to information. This can lead to useful knowledge creation for ASEAN policymaking and can even reduce expenses in governmental research costs.^{88 89} At the end of the day, a strengthened civil society leads to a strengthened state.⁹⁰ However, ASEAN will have to overcome its long-ingrained fears of releasing a modicum of power to its people before it is able to proclaim that it is effectively inclusive and has achieved its declared goals and visions.

⁸¹ William F. Fisher, “Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 439-464.

⁸² Kanishka Jayasuria and Garry Rodan, “Beyond Hybrid Regimes: More Participatin, Less Contestation in Southeast Asia,” *Democratization* 14(5) (2007): 773-794, accessed 23 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/13510340701635647.

⁸³ Margi Prideaux, “Wildlife NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators,” *Global Policy* 6(4) (2015): 379-388.

⁸⁴ Koch et al, 2009

⁸⁵ Herman Joseph S. Kraft, “Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia: the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor,” *Global Networks* 2(1) (2002): 49-63.

⁸⁶ See Seng Tan, “Non-official Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: “Civil Society” or “Civil Service”?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27(3) (2005): 370-87.

⁸⁷ Kanishka Jayasuria and Garry Rodan, “Beyond Hybrid Regimes: More Participatin, Less Contestation in Southeast Asia,” *Democratization* 14(5) (2007): 773-794, accessed 23 August 2016, doi: 10.1080/13510340701635647.

⁸⁸ Raymond Cléménçon, “Economic Integration and the Environment in Southeast Asia: Securing Gains from Open Markets while Preventing Further Environmental Degredation,” *Journal of Environment & Development* 6(3) (1997): 317-333.

⁸⁹ Kal Raustiala, “States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997):719-740.

⁹⁰ Sheelagh Stewart, “Happy Ever After in the Marketplace: Non-Government Organisations and Uncivil Society,” *Review of African Political Economy* 24(71) (1997): 11-34.

The NGO Matrix

In order to help reduce the burden of uncertainty, an NGO Matrix is proposed as a tool to evaluate the types of NGOs that can and should be supported by ASEAN governments. This tool does not look at existing criteria for ASEAN NGO affiliation, which requires that NGOs are in line with ASEAN's state-centric targets. Instead, it hopes to assist ASEAN with the unfamiliar task of allowing civil society to create an agenda and drive forces for change and transformation. This will enable the region to meet sustainable development goals through local community participation and environmental protection.

In her search for new ways to support civil society in Africa, Stewart noted that not all NGOs are equal and that NGOs will always need to work within political constraints.⁹¹ These issues have been highlighted in earlier sections, and this paper has put forward the need to work with home-grown NGOs instead of INGOs or large transboundary ENGOs. Stewart also noted that the state is not necessarily the villain and that not all NGOs do good. It is along these lines that this matrix has been created, to show that some NGOs are worthy of support and assistance, and unlike Western dichotomies of development, not all governments are inherently bad. This NGO Matrix adopts the Pragmatic Stand mentioned by Stewart, and is principally concerned with “what works” for each situation that is assessed. It recognises that smaller home-grown NGO and grassroots groups’ abilities and successes cannot necessarily be scaled up for larger areas, but can be adapted to similar scenarios once the context of that particular situation has been taken into consideration.

In their analysis of civil society influence on international organisations, Pallas and Uhlin⁹² examine four characteristics that affect the extent of civil society influence. These factors are:

1. **Porousness** – structural features that enable or hinder access by civil society
2. **Contacts** – whom civil society groups know or can reach
3. **Alignment** – agency and interests between civil society and IOs
4. **Power** – the ability to prompt action in another party which it would not otherwise have taken

Pallas and Uhlin then use these factors to assess CSO abilities to influence IOs, with a view of identifying how civil society groups can find allies in international funders or gain influence through state channels. “Alignment” in the above matrix can be likened to the “approach” that NGOs take to achieve their goals. “Contacts” can be adapted to indicate the NGO’s “origins” and the types of “participants” that partake in its programmes and activities. These factors will help to identify qualities that might indicate willingness and usefulness in collaborating with ASEAN or a local government. While “porousness” in the sense that it is used by Pallas and Uhlin might not be completely relevant in

⁹¹ Sheelagh Stewart, “Happy Ever After in the Marketplace: Non-Government Organisations and Uncivil Society,” *Review of African Political Economy* 24(71) (1997): 11-34.

⁹² Christopher L. Pallas and Anders Uhlin, “Civil Society Influence on International Organizations: Theorizing the State Channel,” *Journal of Civil Society* 10(2) (2014): 184-203, accessed 28 July 2016, doi: 10.1080/17448689.2014.921102.

the Matrix proposed, an analysis of NGO funding sources will provide an indication of the organisation's susceptibility to external influences.

The proposed NGO Matrix adapts the above model to identify characteristics that can be used to assess NGOs for their potential compatibility with ASEAN, notwithstanding the organisation's ineligibility or disinterest in ASEAN NGO affiliation status. This tool should be applied on a local level, with a view of adapting and applying the lessons learnt or approaches used in other similar scenarios within ASEAN. The characteristics used to assess NGOs are derived from the discussion outlined in earlier sections, with a view to identifying NGOs that can work within local political structures, solve problems, meet needs that cannot be met by state actors alone, and take on watchdog and policy-advisory roles. These NGOs can be supported and nurtured to work with the state instead of against it. Together, the state and civil society can tackle environmental issues, meet the needs of the marginalised and fulfil sustainable development goals. For the purpose of this paper, the NGO Matrix focuses on ENGOs and the fields relevant to them.

The factors to be examined under the NGO Matrix are as follows:

1. **Expertise** – knowledge or access available to the NGO whether it be scientific skills (relevant to monitoring and policy development) or long-term local knowledge and access as a result of its duration of existence in the area.
2. **Origins** – whether the NGO is a home-grown, local initiative based on local needs, wants and visions or an entity guided by “outsiders” responding to external ideals and ambitions.
3. **Participation** – whether NGO members and participants are locals actively being empowered to lead or takeover the organisation or “outsiders” who merely use the locality with no interaction with or involvement of the local community.
4. **Funding** – availability of financial and other support; whether the organisation has a large consistent funder or if it is constantly looking for the next contribution to continue operations.
5. **Approach** – the style with which the organisation works to achieve its goals: education and empowerment for local communities coupled with some conciliatory engagement with local authorities or adversarial and manipulative, with overt use of political tools.

In order to illustrate the use of this matrix, four actual NGOs currently working in an area in South Malaysia are assessed according to the rubric above. The actual location of this scenario is not identified and the names of the organisations have been changed. However, the qualities and characteristics described are real. A summary of the featured organisations are as follows:

- **Kuantum** – A small home-grown locally-led organisation that has a substantial local and international network of scientific and education advisors and supporters, but functions according to the vision of its local leader and founder. The organisation has evolved from an

environmental awareness club to a capacity-building organisation in response to the onslaught of urbanisation, development and natural habitat loss.

- **Mansid** – A large national NGO that has branches in all states, with interests in environmental protection issues across the country. The organisation runs according to a general mandate set at its central headquarters but has special interests in issues relevant to individual states. The organisation may or may not have true local representation in all areas of concern and has minimal engagement with the local community in the location featured in this illustration. It has, however, expressed its views on development in the area.
- **Skuda** – A small home-grown NGO that has some history in the featured location, but its leader is not local and the group does not engage with the local community, preferring instead to bring in participants and members from outside the area to partake in scientific monitoring of the natural habitat there. Local community engagement is confined to ad-hoc sessions in schools, some of which ended in “Greenpeace-style” photo shoots in threatened natural areas and the instigation of the local community to participate in protests against the local authorities.
- **Wilden** – A large international NGO which focuses on specific environmental issues and collected baseline data in the area but has not returned to the ground since its initial surveys. It has not expressed any views for or against the state or federal development projects in the area.

Application of the NGO Matrix

The above organisations were plotted against the factors listed in the earlier section. In terms of *expertise*, the organisations were assessed on the extent and type of knowledge they have, as well as the duration of their presence in the area.

	KUANTUM	MANSID	SKUDA	WILDEN
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential, traditional, ecological, knowledge • Scientific data collection • Longitudinal & baseline data of the area • Access to local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature experts with some scientific background • Nationally recognised as environmental advocates • Limited access to local community or knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific data collection • Some longitudinal and baseline data on local species of interest • Very limited access to local knowledge or community (by choice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific expertise in fields of interest • Baseline data of area before development for the purpose of gazettelement • No access to local knowledge or community • No further data collection or monitoring

In terms of *origins*, the groups were assessed based on their organisational structure and the development of their goals and interests.

	KUANTUM	MANSID	SKUDA	WILDEN
Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local initiative Based on local vision and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by a central mandate at the federal level State branches free to focus on issues of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originated by researcher from another state, but based on environmental situation in location of interest Functions according to scientific interests of founder and partners (all of whom are not from the locality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International ENGO with branches in many countries Local office is not in location of interest

In terms of *participation*, the organisations were assessed in terms of who is able to participate in their activities and who the group actually engages with on the ground.

	KUANTUM	MANSID	SKUDA	WILDEN
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local community members Local youth trained to take over the management and organisation of the organisation. These youth work fulltime but are currently still undergoing training Focus on community capacity-building for alternative livelihoods and incomes given habitat loss and displacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local (state and national) as well as foreign participation in activities Currently no real engagement with local community at site of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No local community participation by choice Occasional engagement with school youth through ad hoc events Use of local community as participants in political lobbying efforts No full-time staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No local community participation beyond the collection of baseline data No further engagement since its baseline study of several decades past

The *funding* sources of each organisation is assessed with a view to determining whether there are international or local contributions. This is to provide an indication of potential risk of external or 'foreign' influence on their activities.

	KUANTUM	MANSID	SKUDA	WILDEN
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported in periodic reports for the general public/funders • Sporadic and inconsistent, comprising private donations from friends and small grants from business funders such as Shell and the Ford Foundation • Often dependent upon the co-founders' savings to fill gaps in funding • Attempts to tap local developers and businesses for small grants and support • Limited but unsustainable funding through community tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published in Annual General Meetings • Consistent, with support from central management • Several large private and state donors • Self-sustained through membership fees, activities and fund-raising managed by staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpublished sources • Several international funders such as DANIDA and other IOs • Some funding through tours and public activities, as well as sale of products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent external funding based on international sources

For *approach*, each organisation was assessed in terms of their method of engagement with others; bit it in a conciliatory, aggressive, top-down or grassroots manner.

	KUANTUM	MANSID	SKUDA	WILDEN
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community education and empowerment • Strictly apolitical and areligious (as listed in its organisation charter) • Some engagement with local authorities and developers where there is access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective partnerships and engagement with business/ local authorities • Occasionally adversarial depending on the target “offender” and existing funding source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely adversarial • Use of political players against each other and the local authorities • Active lobbying through protests and provocative messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively engages with state and federal governments • Plays advisory role to national authorities • Contributes to policy development based on scientific expertise but rarely gathers local community input

Discussion

The above analysis identifies characteristics that could be of interest to the local government, and also gives an example of how the tool can be used at the regional level. In the above illustration, it is clear that all the NGOs have scientific expertise that can be useful for policy development, decision-making or knowledge generation. However, only Kuantam has long-term/substantial access to the local community and its experiential, traditional, ecological knowledge. Coupled with its local origins and participation, these qualities indicate an ability to impact public opinion, legitimise stakeholder engagement and increase positive perceptions of the government or governing body through its reach and access. Wilden and Skuda on the other hand, have no engagement with the local community and do not originate there. This weakens their usefulness in winning over the citizens in the area for whatever reason that might be of interest. It is also an indication of their detachment from real issues that might be of concern to a voting or influential public. While Mansid has some access to the local community and is a nationally recognised organisation with a local branch, it does not actively engage with the community on the ground in this area and therefore might not really be in touch with the issues that really matter to the people.

In terms of financing, Wilden and Mansid seem to be the most stable and may not need further support. Because there is little information on Skuda’s funding sources, it might be susceptible to foreign influence or could be acting as a subversive tool of foreign elements. This possibility is further compounded by its tendency to be provocative and adversarial. Mansid and Wilden have already been shown to collaborate with and advise the local authorities and are already in a position to contribute to policy-making. While Kuantum has no such experience, it seems to be open to working

with those in authority and is explicitly apolitical and unbiased in its workings. Its intimate understanding of issues on the ground also ensures that it is able to provide accurate feedback on matters that need to be examined and taken into consideration for policy development and deliberations.

Given these qualities, it is clear that Kuantum is the organisation that the government should examine in closer detail with a view of tapping into its accessibility and expertise, and maximising on its independence yet willingness to engage with those in authority. Given its unstable financial situation, the government should also provide it with financial and other support so that it does not become susceptible to foreign influence through external funding sources. Kuantam would be the best candidate to collaborate with from the viewpoint of the government or governing body in the area.

Should this tool be applied across the region, ASEAN would have a portfolio of local, home-grown NGOs that would be able to contribute real and useful information that can lead to effective policymaking. NGO empowerment through this participation and contribution would help to nurture a sense of regional community through ownership of policies made. Tapping onto the grassroots connections of these active local entities given their strength in representing the people could then translate into a buy-in to a regional spirit that would spill over to the communities represented by the NGOs.

Limitations

The above illustration demonstrates a tool that can be used to discern between varying NGOs within a certain location. The resulting analysis can help local governments to determine priorities and needs that can be supported, or identify red flags in terms of potential troublemakers. The given example is rather localised, but the tool can be used on a regional level to determine local NGOs which might be working on a cause relevant to ASEAN. The NGO Matrix could help ASEAN differentiate between locally funded, home-grown NGOs and broader externally initiated NGOs with local or regional participants or bigger, more prominent international NGOs. The factors that were identified help to draw out qualities that might leave the NGOs in question susceptible to foreign influence or might lead to risks for ASEAN should it decide to engage with or cooperate with them.

The NGO Matrix has not yet been tested on other types of NGOs, such as humanitarian or special interest groups. In doing so, consideration has to be made for qualities or factors that might be especially important or unique to these other NGO genres. The testing of this Matrix on other NGO types or across the region would be interesting areas for future research.

A number of assumptions have been made in order for the NGO Matrix to work. The most important is the willingness of ASEAN and the local government to release power to the NGO at hand and allow it to continue to function as it always has. ASEAN and each member's governing body would need to

do this and at the same time, guide the NGO towards providing useful input for ASEAN decision-making and policy deliberations without controlling it or totally taking over. The NGO will only be an effective contributor as an independent entity. In a case where the NGO or issue at hand is positioned against ASEAN as the regional body or the ruling government, the aforementioned release of power or space may not actually be possible. From the NGO's viewpoint, there is a fear of being co-opted or completely subsumed into the government or ASEAN machinery. It is vital that the NGO at hand remains a non-state actor so that its assets and functionality in terms of being a watchdog, representative of the people, benefactor to those in need, disseminator of positive perceptions of ASEAN, or knowledge creator remain intact.

Conclusion

In line with its inclusive rhetoric and proclaimed goals, ASEAN needs to actively engage with its people. Reservations and potential issues can be overcome by focusing on smaller, home-grown NGOs, CSOs or grassroots organisations. This paper has proposed an NGO Matrix as a tool that can help ASEAN and its member states discern between various types of NGOs present in a given scenario or locality. Through the indicators provided, the authorities will be able to determine which organisation can best be nurtured and supported for the benefit of ASEAN, its member state governments and civil society. In order to achieve this, ASEAN will have to concede some of its power and allow for ground-up movements to make a real contribution to regional policy-making and governance. By releasing that modicum of power, ASEAN stands to strengthen its credibility and achieve its goals of a people-oriented community and empowered civil society.

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