



BUILDING PEOPLE-ORIENTED AND PARTICIPATORY ALTERNATIVE REGIONALISM MODELS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Introduction

The adoption of the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is widely regarded as a shining feather in the cap of the 40-year-old regional body that started out as a political and security cooperation among five neighbouring countries. The membership of the ASEAN has since grown into 10 member-states bonded together by the dream for economic integration envisioned to facilitate intra-regional trade and to make the region attractive to foreign investors.

Through its four decades of existence, the ASEAN has evolved its own culture of regional governance and internal operations. The principle of non-interference is seen as inviolable, and in many ways, more sacred than such universal principles as human rights. All decisions are made by consensus among member-states, regardless of the peoples' interests that may be at stake.

Undeniably, the development process of the ASEAN is purely state-centred. Its shift from a regional grouping bound by political-security cooperation to its current aspiration for economic integration involved decisions made by the member-states on behalf of the people in the region. ASEAN may have matured politically, but its ownership by the people of Southeast Asia has tragically been left behind. Four decades after its founding, the ASEAN remains a distant concept to many people in the region, who generally do not see its relevance in their lives. This wide distance is regarded as an extension of

the distance between the peoples of Southeast Asia and their national governments that are supposed to represent the peoples' interests in the ASEAN.

To the present and future population of Southeast Asia, the ASEAN ideally symbolizes the essence of regionalism in peoples' lives. In reality, however, detached from the lives of the common people, the ASEAN represents a top-down and state-centred type of regionalism – the only form of institutional regionalism that the people in this part of the planet know.

This study aims to look at other models of regionalism that exist in other parts of the world that may help Southeast Asian civil society explore the potentials of regionalism in advancing the interests of the people, particularly the interests of the poor that comprise the overwhelming majority of region's population.

Research Objectives

The research aims to propose a kind of regionalism - in the economic, political and social spheres - that Southeast Asia may undertake which promotes development for the poorer sectors of society – namely, the small-scale men and women producers, fishers, indigenous peoples and workers based on a good understanding of lessons learned from regional integration processes and experiences on regionalism in other parts of the world.

In the process of conducting the research, affirmed by the feedbacks from the participants in the forum where the first draft of the study was presented, another objective evolved to be covered by the study: To explore other forms of regionalism that go beyond the state-centred and economic-oriented models that exist.

Research Questions:

The study will address the following research questions:

1. On the ASEAN regional integration processes

- What are the underlying framework, goals and principles of ASEAN regional integration?
- How is regional integration being carried out by the ASEAN?
- What are the benefits, threats, actual and potential impacts and implications of this regional integration on the agricultural, trade and services sectors? On small-scale men and women farmers? On industrial and informal workers?
- Will regional integration work in the ASEAN, considering the historical, political and economic contexts of its Member Countries?

2 On the experiences in regional integration by other regions and continents:

What are the underlying framework, goals and principles of the regional integration models adopted by the EU; IBSA; Mercosur ALBA and TCP in Latin America; SADC and the African Union in Africa; and SAARC in South Asia?

- How was regional integration carried out in these regions?
- What have been the benefits, threats and impacts of the regional integration on the agricultural, trade and services sectors? On the farming sector? On the industrial and informal workers?
- What valuable lessons can civil society and countries in the ASEAN learn from these experiences?

In addition to the above questions, other relevant concerns also arose from the forum where the first draft of the study was presented. Among those questions that the study will attempt to tackle are as follows:

1. On the experiences in regional integration in other regions:

- a. What are the historical, political, economic and social context that gave rise to those models? Who

are the movers and what are the drivers behind them? What are the key challenges faced by the models?

b. What are the platforms for civil society engagement in those models of regional integration?

2. On the principles and elements of people-centered regionalism

a. What are the potential key drivers for people-centered regionalism? What will make people-centered regionalism worthy for states to give up part of their sovereignty?

b. What are the key premises for those elements and principles to be translated into reality and beyond motherhood statements?

c. What are the options available for civil society organizations in pushing for alternative regionalism models that are people-centred?

Scope of the Study

The study focuses in exploring the different aspects of state-centred, institutional models of regionalism - all initiated, led, and implemented by states. The models scrutinized in the study all belong to established “old” models of regionalism, which are bonded together by their geographic proximity and cultural affinity. The paper does not cover the “new” models of regionalism based on common economic and trade interests of states that may be located across geographic areas. The study focuses only on macro-models of regional formations among countries bonded by common strategic objectives. The research also covers examples of civil society-initiated regional cooperation which were primarily established in reaction to or as a parallel process to the established regional formations among states tackled in the paper.

The research is not an in-depth analysis of key regionalism models but focuses in looking at the key features of each model, namely the objectives and principles, decision-making processes, agenda for the poor sectors, and opportunities for civil society engagement – in an effort to analyze the actual agenda and potentials of each model in serving the interest of small-scale farmers and producers, workers and

indigenous peoples. The translation of lofty principles and objectives into processes in decision-making and the strategic framework and programs to address the problems of marginalized sectors are given particular attention in the analysis.

The analysis of current regionalism models serves as the starting point in appreciating the models of regionalism across the world in contrast to the regionalism model in Southeast Asia represented by the ASEAN. It further serves as the basis for distilling the key elements and principles of a model of regionalism that will potentially better serve the interests of the poor people.

Methodology

The study mainly relied on secondary literature on the diverse and evolving concepts and models of regionalism. In analyzing the different components and processes surrounding existing models of regionalism, the Researcher depended heavily on the information and facts provided in the official website of the regional groupings studied, and less on secondary literature, to allow for first-hand analysis of experiences of each model and the lessons derived from them.

The first draft of the paper was presented in a roundtable discussion held on 24 July 2007 at the Partnership Centre in Quezon City. The forum was attended by some 20 participants representing the member-organizations of the Asian Farmers Alliance for Sustainable Development (AFA), AsiaDHRRA and the Trade Advocacy Group (TAG). Additional feedbacks and inputs were obtained from the members of TAG in a small roundtable discussion held at Café Molinari in Quezon City on 28 September 2007. The comments, inputs and suggestions from the participants were gathered and used by the Researcher in revising the draft and coming out with the final version of the paper.

Conceptual Framework

A better way to understand regionalism as a concept, beyond the model exemplified by the ASEAN, is to dissect the ideas involved in it. The principal core of regionalism is, of course, the region which is defined as “a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence (Nye, 1968 cited in Barry and Keith, 2006). Intergovernmental formations within a region such as the ASEAN constitute regional governance which is “...generally associated with the set of social functions concerned with making collective choices amongst people delineated by geographical proximity and other shared notions of sameness ... also concerned with the regime that constitutes the set of fundamental rules for the intergovernmental institutions in the narrow sense’ (Bøås 2002, as cited in Chandra, 2006). Regional governance could cover a broad array of concerns from political to socio-cultural to economic, or by conscious collective decision by the members of the regional grouping, may just be limited in one specific sphere such as economic or political. The regional governance or regionalism exemplified by the ASEAN started with mostly political and security concerns, which later evolved to cover a broad array of concerns, but is currently heavily focused on the economic aspects especially since the 90s.

A broader concept than regional governance is “regionalism” which is defined by Barry and Keith (2006) as “Institutionalized cooperation among groups of states to give trade benefits to each other that may or may not extend to third parties – is an attempt to harness the pressures of globalization through strengthened collaboration?”. Current literature on regionalism is heavily tilted towards the economic aspect of cooperation among states, with the concept often taken as synonymous to regional economic integration. The definition, as exemplified by the one cited here, is often uni-dimensional and explained only in the context of economic and trade. Often missing are the other equally important aspects of development, namely political, socio-cultural, and the environment.

Some literature analyzes regionalism in the context of globalization, often citing the former as a potential counter-force to the negative effects of the latter. Some even regard regional governance as the ideal basis

for global governance, which could not be farther from the present-day reality where global governance, particularly in the economic sphere, has little connection with regional governance. In many regions across the world, regional groupings may exist but many have no impact in influencing global governance.

Regionalism as a concept is evolving. While “regions”, in the strict sense of the word as defined above, may be largely bound by the geographical location of member-states, the term has gone beyond geographic boundaries over the years. More recent examples of regionalism actually “bring together both geographically proximate and more distant states, with varying levels of economic development and different national outlooks, driven by global markets and technology” (Barry and Keith, 2006). Examples of this new mode of regionalism are the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), both of which are more of economic integration models. Notably, the shift from the traditional mode of regionalism based on geographic proximity took place in the context of changes in the global political economy, the widespread embrace of market principles, and the transformation of world politics brought about by the end of the Cold War.

Using the “old” and “new” modes of regionalism introduced by Barry and Keith, ASEAN can be clearly categorized as a traditional form of regionalism where member-states are bonded together by their geographic proximity in Southeast Asia and their cultural affinity as mainly Malay in origin, at least for the key founding countries. The same is true for the rest of the regionalism models covered by this study, which are all well-established in the geographic areas where the territories of the member-states are found and where their populations live.

While the regionalism models bound by traditional ties are the most well-established and the oldest, they may not necessarily be the strongest in terms of political and economic interests as will be expounded in this research. The new modes of regionalism bound by common economic or trade interests, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), may have stronger economic influence and political muscle than the ASEAN, for example.

It is also interesting to note that regionalism as a concept is generally defined in the existing literatures from the point of view of the States. So is the concept of regions. Non-state actors, particularly civil society actors and communities, are implied as part of the definition of States whose basic elements include territories and population. Since the 90s, however, some models are emerging that challenge the traditional notion of regions and regionalism. Civil society movements have emerged beyond the confines of national boundaries and have forged cooperation at the regional and even international levels. Notably, however, most of the regional and international cooperation among civil society organizations emerged as a reaction to the state-initiated models of regionalism. This can be gleaned from the APEC Peoples' Summit which is held in the sidelines of the annual APEC Summits. Similar patterns are also seen in the civil society processes held in parallel with the ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) where peoples' summits and civil society conferences shadow key meetings and the annual summits of the heads of states to provide a platform for the poor sectors, who are generally not represented in the state-led process, to articulate their views on key issues in the agenda.

There are notable examples of civil society initiatives in regional cooperation in Asia that are worth exploring in challenging the traditional notion of regionalism beyond the confines of the states. The Asian Farmers' Alliance for Sustainable Development (AFA), for example, is a cooperation among farmers' organizations in different countries in Asia to address the issues in sustainable development and food security. Southeast Asia Fish for Justice Network (SEAFISH), a network of fisherfolk and NGOs in Southeast Asia that advocates for sustainable fishers and fair trade, is another form of regional cooperation among civil society organizations working on issues affecting small-scale fishers at the sub-regional level. These are models of regional cooperation among marginalized sectors of society and civil society organizations from different parts of a defined geographic area bonded together by their shared problems and common vision in addressing their marginalization. These models provide a common platform for the marginalized sectors to present their views on their situation and needs, and to voice out the solutions to their situations. Their concrete experiences can potentially challenge the traditional forms of regionalism and promote a genuinely alternative mode of regionalism that is initiated, developed and led by the poor sectors of society.

As mentioned in an earlier section, this paper will only focus on the traditional state-initiated models of regionalism to serve as basis in culling out lessons towards building the elements of a people-oriented alternative regionalism. These lessons may be valuable in guiding the on-going attempts of civil society organizations and the marginalized sectors in their journey towards making regionalism serve the interests of small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, workers and indigenous peoples.

Regionalism: the ASEAN Way

Prior to the establishment of the ASEAN, a non-political confederation comprised of the then Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia was formed in 1963 with the aim of uniting the Malay race (Wikipedia). The regional association was called MAPHILINDO, an acronym that stands for the names of the three countries that formed it. It was established in July 1963 through a summit in Manila convened by then President Diosdado Macapagal with the lofty goal of realizing the dream of the Philippines' national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, to bring together the Malay peoples who were seen as divided by colonial rule (Wikipedia). Prior to its formation in 1963, there were vision and attempts in previous decades to unite the Malay nations which did not come into fruition.

The bond behind MAPHILINDO is clearly based on the cultural and historical ties among the peoples of the three countries. It aimed to revive these historical ties by strengthening cooperation among the members and by approaching issues of common concern in the spirit of consensus. The political circumstances that gave birth to and surrounded the regional association, however, overshadowed the forward-looking vision of uniting the Malay peoples.

Beyond the lofty goals of cooperation based on common cultural and historical ties, MAPHILINDO was widely regarded in literature as a political scheme by the governments of Indonesia and the Philippines to preempt the formation of the Federation of Malaysia which was then coming out of the British rule. All

three governments have claims on various parts of the naturally-endowed island of Borneo, with Indonesia occupying the Kalimantan side in the east, Malaysia occupying Sarawak and British Borneo (which was later named as Sabah) which the Philippines also has claims on. The integration of the British colonies into the Federation of Malaya, which later became Malaysia after Singapore decided to separate, was seen by Indonesia as a consolidation of the British rule in the region, while the Philippines was asserting its historical claim over Sabah.

The political and boundary disputes later escalated into a crisis with Indonesia's adoption of the konfrontasi policy which resulted into local wars with Malaysia in the island of Borneo a few months following the formation of MAPHILINDO. The formation of the confederation did not at all help in abating the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia which raged on for three years, finally ending in August 1966 with the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries.

With an ironic background of political conflict that matured into a three-year confrontation, MAPHILINDO was short-lived. Some may even say that the regional association was doomed from the start, with the lingering doubts on the real political motives behind its formation hidden behind its lofty goals of uniting the Malay race. Its failure, however, may be regarded as one of the main impetus behind the formation of one of the world's longest-running and most cohesive regional formation - the ASEAN.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967 by the neighboring states of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The end of the conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia, and the separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaya, provided the setting for its establishment. Completing the political context was the continuing expansion of influence of the Communist China into the rest of Indo-China, specifically the northern part of Vietnam and Laos, where the armed forces of the United States were occupied with defending "democracy" in a part of the world so far away from the US soil. This provides the big picture of the political and historical landscape that gave birth to the ideals of the ASEAN.

The Bangkok Declaration that established the ASEAN states the key objectives of the regional grouping as follows:

1. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations;
2. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter;
3. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields;
4. To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres;
5. To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilization of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples;
6. To promote South-East Asian studies; and
7. To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.

These objectives outline in general terms the key areas of cooperation among the member-states of the ASEAN, namely political, economic and socio-cultural spheres, which guided the various agreements, protocols and treaties that they entered into over the next 40 years. Notably, the sub-region being mainly agriculture-based, agriculture was particularly mentioned in the ASEAN's founding document, albeit in the context of utilization and trade. Its founding document, however, does not provide a clear vision of regionalism that the ASEAN meant to promote, beyond the motherhood statements on cooperation. Its

precursor, MAPHILINDO, was much more straight-forward in its goal of uniting the Malay race based on shared history and cultural ties.

Over the four decades that followed the signing of the Bangkok Declaration, largely as a result of international trends and developments, cooperation among the ASEAN members has varied its focus from political concerns to economic integration, punctuated by some attention on socio-cultural and environmental concerns at various stages. ASEAN cooperation in the 70s and the 80s, the tumultuous decades characterized by the Cold War and the pervasive paranoia on Communist expansion in Southeast Asia, was largely characterized by a collective concern among its original members on political and security cooperation. With the end of the Cold War and the entry of five more members into the regional club, the 90s was characterized by ASEAN's focused efforts towards economic integration as embodied by the establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

Mechanisms to promote trade liberalization and economic openness were put in place of the voluntary preferential trading agreements of the 70s. Major means of economic integration includes the AFTA, the ASEAN Investment Area (AIA), the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), and the bilateral free trade agreements (BFTAs). The ultimate goal for regional economic integration is the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) as envisioned in the Bali Concord II adopted in 2002. The economic integration process is mainly aimed at strengthening the ASEAN's position in the global trading system, specifically to make the region more economically competitive, attractive to foreign trade investments and to help the members prepare for further regional and international economic liberalization efforts. Notably, nowhere in the key documents that lay down ASEAN's vision for economic integration is pushing for the promotion of economic cooperation among its members, neither to establish common production base to promote regional independence.

Some authors see clear logic behind the shift in the focus of cooperation among the ASEAN member-states, from political cooperation to economic cooperation, rationalizing that the regional political stability promoted by the ASEAN in its early decades is seen as the principal factor behind the present economic

growth among its member. On other hand, there are some authors that regard ASEAN the regional economic governance as more of a response to the situation and problems that the region faced since its inception in 1967 (Chandra, 2006). To the latter, the ASEAN was merely adapting to the changes in the international political economy in the late 1980s and the early 1990s and the increasing influence of economic actors in the region, in order to maintain its position as an important organisation in light of these changes (Bowles and Maclean, 1996).

The efforts of the ASEAN towards economic integration, however, are generally seen as a failure, or very slow at best. The expected outcome, especially on the economic benefits among small and medium economic actors has not been clearly visible. Nearly two decades after the mechanisms for regional economic integration has been put in place, the benefits have yet to be seen even at the macro level. Intra-regional trade remains small when compared to the total trade with the major trading partners. Intra-ASEAN exports have in fact decreased from 25 percent in 1996 to 22.6 percent in 2004, while intra-ASEAN imports have increased from 18.3 percent to 22 percent in the same period (ASEAN Statistical Pocketbook, 2005). In contrast, the share of the top five markets in 2003 – namely, US, EU, Japan, China and South Korea) in the ASEAN's total export was 56.4 percent and total import was 60.80 percent (ibid.).

While the policy of trade liberalization and openness has been widely adopted and pushed by virtually all its member-states, the ASEAN's influence in economic rule-making in the region is minimal compared to the influence of such international economic actors as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the international financial institutions (IFIs) which are pushing for the same agenda. In fact, the trade liberalization policies in some ASEAN countries, like Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines, actually precede the regional body's economic integration efforts and are actually more of a result of pressures from the IFIs, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (WB-IMF) in the case of the Indonesia and the Philippines which had to comply with structural adjustment programs from the 70s. In a closer analysis, the ASEAN merely complements and reinforces international and bilateral pressures on its member-countries to embrace free trade.

The weakness of ASEAN's economic integration efforts is attributed by some analysts to resistance of national governments to surrender some of their power to the regional institutions and to the failure of civil society to exert pressures on regional institutions (Chandra, 2006). Beyond the institutional factors, there are more important and concrete reasons for the failure of the ASEAN's economic integration efforts. First among these is the fact that the countries in Southeast Asia are largely producing and trading the same commodities, namely electronics and equipment parts among the developing member-states and agricultural commodities and garments among the least-developed members. Another factor is the fact that the 10 member-states have the same major trading partners, namely the US, EU, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan and Australia. The competition among the member-states for trade with their major trading partners, mainly trading the same commodities and manufactured goods, is understandably overshadowing efforts for economic integration. Another important factor that is generally overlooked, and even ignored, in explaining the failure or the very slow pace of economic integration in the ASEAN is the lack of consultation with or participation in the formulation of programs and policies by the basic sectors that produce the commodities that are traded by the region.

With regard to other aspects of regionalism beyond the economic and political spheres, ASEAN's mechanisms to advance socio-cultural goals are much weaker. In the operationalization of the vision of creating a caring societies in the ASEAN outlined in the Vision 2020, collaboration in the socio-cultural sphere is mainly limited to coordination of national-level actions related to designated themes without providing regional standards, benchmarks and common goals. The focus of attention of the ASEAN in the socio-cultural sphere is largely determined by the themes of inter-governmental processes at the international level such as the United Nations. Women and gender concerns, for example, became part of the agenda of the ASEAN when the UN highlighted these themes. The same way with HIV/AIDS, population and poverty alleviation issues.

On the environment, ASEAN's vision of regionalism is much more vague beyond the common goal of exploiting the region's natural resources to deliver economic benefits. The environment as an area of concern for the ASEAN only came about on the second decade of the regional body and was nowhere

mentioned in any of its founding documents. The thrust of the ASEAN's efforts on the environment are largely dependent on the focus of intergovernmental processes such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which brought the concerns on sustainable development into the ASEAN agenda.

At the international level, the ASEAN has no common position on key international negotiations on trade, economic, political, social and environmental issues. Despite its 40 years of cooperation and solidarity as a regional association, there is no such thing as an ASEAN regional/bargaining bloc in any international negotiation although that aspiration has been expressed in a number of documents adopted by its member-states on the environment. The ASEAN Secretariat itself, in fact, was only recently given the recognition as an official Observer at the United Nations. This is quite ironic for a regional body whose efforts in cooperation are largely dictated by external/international developments rather than a direct response to the needs and problems of its peoples.

Structure and Institutions

The highest decision-making body in the ASEAN structure is the Meeting or Summit of the Heads of States which meets annually. This top-level meeting is held within the territory of the member-state that acts as the chairperson of the ASEAN for the year which also hosts most of the meetings of the different bodies throughout the year. In between the summits, the ministers of key line agencies of the member-states, such as economic, finance and foreign affairs, make up the top-level Ministerial Meetings that acts as the key body that oversees the decisions taken up by the different Senior Officials Meetings, Committees, Working Groups and subsidiary bodies that hold meetings throughout the year. The ASEAN Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day operations and provides support and technical assistance to all the meetings of the different bodies.

The ASEAN structure as a whole is a labyrinth of high-level meetings, committees, working groups and task forces on various thematic concerns meeting throughout the year to discuss updates on programs and

activities, plan for more programs and activities, and draft protocols and agreements for the heads of states and ministers to adopt and sign in their annual meetings. The Secretariat revealed that the meetings of the ASEAN take up some 300 days of the year. The logistical and technical requirements of the meetings are largely supported by the Secretariat, while the costs are generally borne by the host-government except those that are part of the programs and projects implemented by the Secretariat that receive funding support from external donors. The costs of the meetings were too much for a least-developed country (LDC) acting as host for the year to support, prompting the Prime Minister of Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic (PDR) to complain in 2004 about the financial burden of hosting the ASEAN meetings.

The “ASEAN Way”

The rules of engagement among the ASEAN member-states were laid down nearly nine years after the organization's founding, through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia signed in February 1979 by the heads of states of the member-states, most of whom gained notoriety for their dictatorial rule. The fundamental principles guiding the ASEAN were laid down in the Treaty as follows:

1. Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;
2. The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
3. Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
4. Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
5. Renunciation of the threat or use of force;
6. Effective cooperation among themselves.

These fundamental principles are at the core of rules that guided the relationship among the ASEAN members through the decades, evolving into a set of values that define the so-called “ASEAN Way”. At the

top of this set of values is the principle of non-interference on the internal affairs of one another, which has evolved into an inviolable rule in the ASEAN. The series of military rules that characterized the political landscape of Thailand and the long years of rampant human rights violations by the series of military juntas that reigned over Burma are living examples of how the principle of non-interference is strictly adhered to by ASEAN member-states, regardless of the costs on human lives and violation of peoples' basic rights.

Decision-making in the ASEAN is strictly based on consensus, another important element in the set of values that characterize the "ASEAN Way". The ASEAN has not adopted any system of voting on matters that require collective decisions, since consensus is regarded as the only means to make decisions in a regional grouping bonded by the goals of amity and cooperation. As the current Secretary-General of the ASEAN noted in a meeting with NGOs in October 2005, consensus is regarded as an expression of the Southeast Asian's virtue of being nice to each other and therefore very consistent with the region's culture. The value of consensus is cast in stone in the ASEAN Charter which purged any reference to voting rules recommended earlier by a panel of eminent persons comprised of former statesmen from the member-countries.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

A clear agenda for the poor sectors of society may not have played out as prominently in the ASEAN as the political security and economic cooperation, but the general recognition on the elimination of poverty, hunger, diseases and illiteracy, and even the promotion of social justice and the improvement of the living standards of the people in the region, has been enshrined in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord adopted in 1976, more popularly known as the Bali Concord I. One of the earlier programs of action in the social sphere identified by the five original member-states for ASEAN cooperation is "in the field of social development, with emphasis on the well being of the low-income group and of the rural population, through the expansion of opportunities for productive employment with fair remuneration." (Declaration of ASEAN Concord I, 24 February 1976).

How the principles of social justice and development, and the social program of action, translated into actual programs at the regional and national levels in the ASEAN, is a completely different issue. The ASEAN does not directly implement programs at the regional level, except for transboundary issues and capacity building. Programs of actions are actually implemented at the national level by appropriate government agencies responsible for specific programs under the ASEAN with funding from international donors. There are no available literature in the official ASEAN website that describe the ASEAN-initiated social development programs implemented in accordance with the principles of the Bali Concord I. The document that may be regarded as having laid down ASEAN's more concrete agenda for the poor sector is the ASEAN Vision 2020, adopted in 1997, nearly a decade after the Bali Concord I. The document painted a future vision of the institution as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, as a partnership in dynamic development, as a community of caring societies, and as an outward-looking ASEAN. These themes outline the long-term vision of the ASEAN in the political, economic and socio-cultural areas, as well as international relations.

Under the theme “community of caring societies”, the ASEAN Vision 2020 envisioned a “vibrant and open ASEAN societies... where all people enjoy equitable access to opportunities for total human development regardless of gender, race, religion, language, or social and cultural background”. Beyond the aim for economic integration which is focused on regional trade integration, the document also envisioned “a socially cohesive and caring ASEAN where hunger, malnutrition, deprivation and poverty are no longer basic problems, where strong families as the basic units of society tend to their members particularly the children, youth, women and elderly; and where the civil society is empowered and gives special attention to the disadvantaged, disabled and marginalized and where social justice and the rule of law reign.” The core document even laid down a general process of governance that would make social development interventions relevant to the peoples of Southeast Asia, by envisioning nations that are “governed with the consent and greater participation of the people with its focus on the welfare and dignity of the human person and the good of the community.”

The intertwined three pillars that formed the core substance of the ASEAN Vision 2020 – namely political, economic and socio-cultural – were further affirmed in the Bali Concord II adopted in 2003, establishing the ASEAN Community. Bali Concord II reiterated the principles laid down in the Bali Concord I and committed to “foster cooperation in social development aimed at raising the standard of living of disadvantaged groups and the rural population, and shall seek the active involvement of all sectors of society, in particular women, youth, and local communities.” Unlike its predecessor, the document, however, fell short of providing concrete action programs in the area of social development beyond stating that its commitment to investing in human resource development and enhancement as a key strategy for employment generation, poverty alleviation and ensuring economic growth with equity.

The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) and the ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE) were established following the Bali Concord II, mainly to provide the framework and guidance for the implementation of the social and rural development and poverty eradication programs of action. The AMRDPE, adopted the Plan of Action on ASEAN Rural Development and Poverty Eradication for 1999-2004 and later the Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, both of which were largely drawn up by the ASEAN Secretariat.

The adoption of the ASEAN Vision 2020 marked the beginning of a new approach by the ASEAN in regional cooperation through the adoption of medium-term plans or programs of action that set out the key priorities and programs of action in the political, economic and socio-cultural areas for a given period. The first of this medium-term action plan is the Hanoi Plan of Action (HPA), which covered the period 1999-2004. In the area of social development, rural development and poverty eradication, the HPA strived to implement the Plan of Action on ASEAN Rural Development and Poverty Eradication adopted by the AMRDPE. It also established a Task Force on Social Safety Nets which formulated the ASEAN Plan of Action on Social Safety Nets, specifically aimed at mitigating the social impacts of the Asian financial and economic crises that wracked the region in 1997.

Despite the commitment to address social justice and equity, there are very few plans of action in the HAP that directly address the plight of the marginalized sectors in the region. It made reference to enhancing food security and food accessibility especially in times of food shortages, and global competitiveness of ASEAN's food, agriculture and forestry products. It also identified the ASEAN Foundation to support activities and social development programs aimed at addressing unequal economic development, poverty and socio-economic disparities. Not a single action program, however, concretely address the needs of poor peasants, workers, indigenous peoples and women – which are left for national governments to tackle beyond the rhetoric at the regional level. The ASEAN Foundation, for one, does not implement poverty alleviation projects anywhere in Southeast Asia, but mainly support capacity building and exchange programs. No specific action program in the HPA is meant to address the widening urban-rural divide as well as the widening gap between the rich and poor at the national level.

The Vientiane Action Program (VAP) for 2004-2010, which succeeded the HPA, reiterated the need to address development issues and the special needs of the less developed member-countries of the ASEAN through the adoption of programs to narrow the development gap, reducing socio-economic disparities and eradicating poverty. It outlines a roadmap for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) focused on four strategic thrusts that include strong and functional systems of social protection that address poverty, equity and health impacts of economic growth. The VAP explicitly recognized the inextricable link of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, especially the potential threats posed by social inequities on the economic development and political stability of the region. It identified regional interventions meant to complement national programs, such as raising the standard of living of marginalized groups by strengthening the capacity of rural development officials and administrators of poverty alleviation program, enhancing food security through the establishment of food security information systems, managing the social impact of economic integration through human resource development and information exchange, etc.

The VAP incorporated the Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication adopted by the AMRDPE in 2004. The Action Plan identified the following as key priorities: globalization;

narrowing the digital divide; social protection, employment and income-generation; partnerships, decentralization and local participation; narrowing the development gap; exchange of young professionals and volunteers involved in rural development; and information-sharing/exchange. The implementation of activities under each of these priority areas is coordinated by a specific member-state, such as the Philippines for the Social Protection action programs. Most of the regional activities under each priority area are focused on research, monitoring of impacts of globalization and economic integration, information-exchange and capacity building.

The ASEAN Charter

The idea of adopting a Charter for the ASEAN has been raised over the years, but was only finally endorsed by the heads of states at their summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005. An Eminent Persons Group (EPG), comprised of high-level active or retired government officials and statesmen from the member-countries, was formed to study and recommend the elements and key substance of the Charter until the following Summit in 2006. After a series of meetings among themselves and a number of national-level consultations initiated by a few members of the EPG, the body came out with a final document outlining its recommendation on the key elements and content of the Charter. The document was adopted by the heads of states at their 12th annual meeting held in Cebu City in January 2007, after a postponement of the original Summit schedule in December 2006.

The Cebu Summit also established the High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Charter (HLTF), comprised of high-level diplomats from the member-states, tasked to formulate the different provisions of the Charter guided by the recommendations of the EPG and in consultation with the member-states. The HLTF was given a one-year timeline to work on the details of the Charter, the final draft of which was submitted to the heads of states at their 14th Summit in Singapore in November 2007. The terms of reference of the HLTF, unlike the EPG, did not include any provision to hold consultations with various sectors in the region. Nevertheless, a few members of the HLTF have initiated national-level consultations with various

sectors to gather inputs that may be fed into the drafting of the Charter. A regional-level consultation was also conducted by the HLTF prior to their second meeting in Manila in March 2007, but no draft of the Charter has been released to the public beyond the press releases and conferences that highlighted some key areas in the HLTF's discussions.

The adoption of the ASEAN Charter in November 2007 is widely regarded as a new phase in the development of the ASEAN as a regional grouping. The Charter institutionalizes the establishment of the ASEAN which did not have an international legal personality since its founding 40 years ago. Contrary to expectations that the Charter will introduce a new culture of regionalism in the ASEAN, it actually systematically affirms the fundamental principles and values laid down in the key agreements, protocols and treaties adopted by the member-states over the decades. The Charter further affirms the mechanisms that led towards the attainment of the vision of an ASEAN Community built on the political, economic and socio-cultural pillars, as laid down in the 2003 Bali Concord II.

Despite the attempts of some member-states for the regional body to reconsider the long-held principle of non-interference and the system of consensus in decision-making, the nearly two-year debates and discussions on the drafting of the ASEAN Charter has conceded to the reality that these principles will have to remain untouched. Aside from a “leak” a few weeks earlier through the Thai Parliament which was constitutionally mandated to consider the document before the Prime Minister can even endorse its adoption at the ASEAN Summit, the final draft of the Charter was only officially released to the public after it was adopted by the heads of states at their conference in Singapore in November 2007, consistent with the lack of transparency and public participation that characterized the way the ASEAN has conducted its business since its inception.

ASEAN and Civil Society

The ASEAN has very limited spaces for engagement with civil society on discussions and decisions affecting the lives of the people in the region. It was not until 1986, nearly 20 years from its establishment, that

the ASEAN adopted a Guideline on its relations with non-government organizations (NGOs) which was aimed at mainstreaming ASEAN activities and ensuring interaction between NGOs and ASEAN bodies. The Guideline was revised 20 years later, with a significant shift from engaging with NGOs to civil society organizations (CSOs) which encompass a broader array of non-government actors in society. Both the original and the revised Guidelines, however, require CSOs to have membership coming from a relatively even-spread of the ASEAN member-countries, thus disqualifying national and local organizations and defeating the terminology shift from NGOs to CSOs. Applications for affiliation have to be approved by the Standing Committee, comprised of foreign ministers of member-states and tasked to coordinate the work of the ASEAN in between the annual Summit of heads of states.

Prior to the adoption of the original Guidelines in 1986, there are already several professional and industry associations affiliated with the ASEAN and officially recognized in the ASEAN Standing Committee meetings since 1979. Cause-oriented groups such as those working on drug and substance abuse prevention, disease awareness and even kite-flying promotion, started to affiliate with the ASEAN when the Guidelines were adopted in June 1986. It was not until 1998 when organizations working directly with communities around the region were finally given official affiliation status by the ASEAN. Currently, there are 54 CSOs that are officially affiliated with the ASEAN. Affiliated CSOs have the privilege to submit written positions and statements on policy matters and discussions in the ASEAN, as well as be invited to official meetings of relevant ASEAN bodies for consultation purposes.

Outside of the official CSO affiliation process, various CSOs working on the environment and human rights have been engaging relevant ASEAN bodies on specific policy issues. Ironically for a regional body known for its official policy of non-interference on domestic matters including human rights violations, the biggest inroads made by CSOs in engaging the ASEAN are in the area of human rights. Since 1996, civil society organizations affiliated with the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism have been proactively lobbying the ASEAN and its member-states on the establishment of an intergovernmental human rights mechanism which the regional body has committed to at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore in 1993. A major fruit of these long years of efforts is the establishment of a

human rights body, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and with terms of reference to be determined by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

In recent years, however, collective efforts of civil society organizations have gradually opened up engagement spaces in the ASEAN as an institution. The ASEAN supported the formation in 2000 of the ASEAN Peoples' Assembly (APA), an annual conference of NGOs and academics to discuss developments issues relevant to the ASEAN. Considered as a "Track Two process", meant as a parallel stream to the official ("Track One") processes, the APA is largely led by academics from the region and has so far failed to generate support and enthusiasm from mainstream movements in providing civil society inputs to ASEAN processes.

The initial attempt to institutionalize the spaces for CSO engagement in the ASEAN took place in the preparations leading to the 11th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005. On the initiative of the Malaysian Government as Summit host, the Standing Committee agreed to recognize the first ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) as part of the official program, as well as provide a first-ever 15-minute interface of CSO representatives with ASEAN Leaders during the Summit. In previous years, the only official interface of non-government entities with ASEAN Leaders during the Summit is with the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ABAC), comprised of business leaders from the region. The official CSO interface, while initially limited to a 15-minute opportunity to present the ACSC Statement to the Leaders, was meant to start a similar tradition for CSOs in the ASEAN.

While endorsed by the Malaysian Government, the first ACSC was exclusively organized and coordinated by a Civil Society Steering Committee chaired by the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UiTM) in Shah Alam. CSOs collectively generated resources to organize the Conference and support the participation of national and local organizations. The ACSC in Shah Alam was attended by over 200 CSO representatives from across the region and produced a Statement that was presented to the Heads of States and posted in the official ASEAN website.

Through the ACSC, the “tradition” of institutionalizing CSO engagement with the ASEAN that was started in Kuala Lumpur was carried forward by CSOs at the ASEAN Summit in Cebu in December 2006 which was later postponed by the Philippine government to 10-13 January 2007 due to a typhoon that did not directly hit Cebu at all, giving rise to speculations on the political and security reasons behind the decision. Months before the Summit, the Standing Committee and the Philippine Host Committee refused to recognize the ACSC II to be part of the official program and gave the 15-minute slot for CSO interface with ASEAN Leaders to the representative of the ASEAN Peoples’ Assembly (APA) from the academe.

Despite the earlier rebuff from the Philippine government and the postponement of the Summit, CSOs working under the Solidarity for Asian People’s Advocacy (SAPA) banner pursued the holding of the ACSC II in Cebu City on 11-13 December 2006. More than 300 participants from CSOs from across Southeast Asia participated in the Conference which came out with a Statement that was officially submitted to the ASEAN Heads of State and the ASEAN Secretariat. The ACSC Statement highlighted the need for people-centered and people-driven ASEAN community built on an alternative framework of regionalism that goes beyond economic integration, upholds the rights of people, and promotes environmental sustainability and equitable access to resources.

Leading to the Singapore Summit, the National Host Committee decided to organize its own civil society conference weeks prior to the Summit itself and refused to recognize the ACSC-3 initiated by members of the SAPA. Despite the absence of any official endorsement, SAPA nevertheless pursued the holding of the ACSC-3 in Singapore on 2-4 November 2007, with more than 200 representatives from peoples’ organizations and NGOs from across the region in attendance. ACSC-3 committed to pursue the drafting and adoption of an ASEAN Peoples’ Charter by the time of the next ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in 2008.

Review of Regionalism Models across the World

This section presents a review of different models of regionalism in different parts of the world. As mentioned in the Introduction of this paper, the regionalism models described here are limited to the state-initiated schemes. This review is no way exhaustive and focuses only on existing established regionalism models that are considered traditional or “old regionalism” in the sense that cooperation is based on geographic proximity and cultural affinity. The Researcher relied mainly on primary documents on the models discussed here, as found in their respective official websites.

Guided by the objectives of the research, discussion in this section will focus on selected elements of each regionalism model, such as structure, governance mechanisms, decision-making processes, programs for the poorer sector society, and opportunities for civil society engagement. The general context, prime movers and key drivers in the formation of each regionalism model, as well as the major challenges that they confront, are also highlighted in the following discussions. The key lessons from each model are also discussed.

The European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) traces its roots to the establishment of the Council of Europe in 1949 and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950. The establishment of the latter was aimed integrating the markets for industrial resources needed for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II and the production of weapons of war. The Treaty of Rome in 1957 gave birth to two more communities, namely the European Economic Community (EEC) which established a Customs Union, and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) for cooperation nuclear energy. These communities were later merged into the EEC in 1967 and later evolved in 1993 to be collectively referred to as the European Community within the EU.

The EU is considered as the oldest and most developed among models of regionalism, with 27 member-states to date. The EU's combined economy is the largest in the world, with its single regional market serving as its backbone and with a common trade policy, common agriculture and fisheries policy, and a regional development policy among its members. It has gradually matured over a span of 50 years from its inception, evolving its unique system of regional governance, structures and institutions, with its members adopting and pushing for common positions on issues in international negotiations on economic, political, social and environmental matters in the present day. It has evolved beyond its initial founding political and security sphere, developing its broad pillars of solidarity, economic and monetary integration as the key areas that bear strategic impacts on the region's people. It is built on the strong recognition of a common European heritage among its peoples.

As stated in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, which consolidated earlier treaties into a coherent version, the EU was established with the following objectives:

1. An area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers ;
2. An internal market where competition is free and undistorted;
3. Sustainable development, based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment;
4. Promotion of scientific and technological advance;
5. Combating of social exclusion and discrimination, and the promotion of social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child;
6. Promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States; and
7. Ensures that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced

Over its more than six decades of existence, the EU has aimed to work towards full regional integration among its members where national frontiers do not exist, with complete openness in trade and markets,

where its peoples can freely seek economic opportunities, and where Europe's common cultural heritage is protected. The regionalism fostered by the EU is widely regarded as the ultimate conventional model that other regional groupings should aspire for.

The EU is guided by the following fundamental principles, as outlined in the Maastricht Treaty:

- Free movement of persons, goods, services and capital within the Union (the famous “four freedoms”) and strictly prohibits any discrimination on grounds of nationality
- Obligation to respect the national identities and the fundamental political and constitutional structures of the Member States. This also includes the principle of loyal cooperation.
- Primacy of the law of the European Union over the law of the Member States
- Right to conclude international agreements
- Article I-7 confers on the European Union legal personality. Following the merger of the European Community and the European Union, the new Union will therefore have the right to conclude international agreements, in the same way as the European Community can today, but without compromising the division of competences between the Union and the Member States.

In practical terms, the operationalization of these principles is much more complex and complicated. The free movement of persons is much harder to implement than goods and services. The primacy of the EU law over national laws is much harder for states to accept and implement, resulting to a complex system where national laws govern over EU laws in specific areas and jurisdictions, and vice-versa.

Structure and Institutions

To implement its objectives towards attaining its vision of full regional integration, the EU has established key institutions. In the Legislative branch is the European Parliament comprised of elected members representing the member-states. The Judicial branch is represented by the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors. The Executive is led by the Council of Ministers and the European Commission, working with the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Key economic and financial institutions are the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

The so-called Lisbon Agenda provides the overall policy framework for the employment and social policy of the EU aimed at creating economic growth and jobs. To address the need to provide more and better jobs for the working population of its members, the EU is guided by a common Employment Strategy outlined in a multi-year Employment Guidelines that set out the common employment priorities and individual objectives of the member-states, as well as reform strategies in the labor market. The Guidelines include human resource investments and development programs aimed at equipping the population with change in a knowledge-based economy envisioned for the EU, ways of improving the matching of labor market needs and available skills, advocating for employment-friendly labor cost development and wage-setting mechanisms, etc. The Employment Guidelines provide minimum rules that are on top of the Europe's long tradition of ensuring decent work environment; strictly-enforced laws against work discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc; and social security systems that may vary across EU states but following a common minimum standard such as pensions and health care.

The Social Agenda, on the other hand, is designed to ensure equitable distribution of EU's growth by providing jobs, fighting poverty and promoting equal opportunities to all. It also provides a framework for supporting EU member-states in reforming pensions and health care, tackling poverty, addressing employment and social issues emerging from aging populating, fostering equal opportunities, and eradicating inequality and discrimination.

The EU has provided adequate and stable financial means to support the implementation of its Employment Strategy and Social Agenda. It has a Social Fund, with 308 billion available for 2007-2013, to help increase the adaptability of workers and enterprises, enhance access to employment and participation in the labor market, eradicate discrimination, facilitate access to the labor market for disadvantaged people, improve education and training systems, and develop institutional capacity in disadvantaged regions. It has a PROGRESS fund with 700 million to improve knowledge of employment

and social issues, train legal and policy practitioners, build cross-border networks for mutual learning and exchange of good practice, and to promote awareness of EU policies. It also has a European Globalization Adjustment Fund with 500 million available every year to provide personalized support to displaced workers caused by trade liberalization.

Specific to the agricultural and rural sectors, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) lays down the EU's fundamental policy framework aimed "to provide farmers with a reasonable standards of living, to provide consumers with quality food at fair prices, and to preserve Europe's rural heritage" (European Commission, October 2004). The CAP has evolved through the decades, from its beginnings in western Europe in the 1950s when its focus was on encouraging better agricultural productivity through subsidies and guaranteed prices to farmers, and by providing financial assistance in farm operations. The policy was able to attain its farm productivity objective that by the 1980s, Europe was producing agricultural surpluses that cannot be absorbed by the export market and had to be disposed within the EU. The high costs of disposing surplus production resulted to major shifts in the CAP in the 1990s toward market-oriented and demand-driven agricultural production, setting of production limits and environmentally-sustainable farm production. Farmers still received direct payments from the government and the EU to maintain income stability, but not directly linked to production and instead guided by the demand, environmental sustainability, and production of quality and safe food.

The shift in CAP's emphasis also brought about a rural development policy that encouraged rural initiatives while helping farmers to diversify production, improve product marketing and business restructuring. The 2003 CAP reform involved a shift in focus to rural development by transferring funds meant for direct payments for big farmers into rural development measures. Assistance is provided to farmers and rural communities engaged in training on new farming techniques and rural crafts, marketing of farm products, agri-environment activities, setting up of producer groups, modernizing farm buildings and machineries, assisting young farmers to set up their own farms, etc. The CAP, including its rural development component, costs the EU less than half of its total budget annually or about 50 billion every year, representing about 1 percent of the total GDP of the EU.

EU and Civil Society

Since its early years, the EU has adopted a formal mechanism for civil society participation, mainly through the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) established under the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The EESC is created as an advisory representing “organized civil society” such as employers, trade unions, farmers, consumers and other interest groups. The body represents the views and defends the interests of the different civil society sectors in policy discussions with the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament. It is considered as an integral part of the EU’s decision-making process, consulted before decisions on economic and social policies are taken.

The EESC has 344 members, with members from each EU member-state proportionate to its population. The members of the Committee broadly represent employers, workers and various economic and social interests that include NGOs, farmers’ organizations, consumers associations, environmental groups, scientific and academic communities, etc. Its composition is largely perceived as dominated by business and trade unions, with NGOs, farmers and other interest groups playing marginal roles. The members are nominated by the EU governments and are appointed for four years, thus mostly regarded as not totally independent from the states despite the insistence of the EU that the body is politically independent. The EESC meets in Plenary Assembly twice a year, with discussions prepared by six sub-committees or sectors dealing with particular policy areas.

Beyond the EESC, NGOs and other civil society organizations in Europe actively engage the different institutions and processes of the EU through various formal and informal channels. Many established environmental NGOs, consumers’ groups and farmers’ organizations, for example, have strong ties and good relations with various political parties in the European Parliament, particularly the smaller, progressive parties that operate at the national levels and coalesce at the regional level. These links provide the open channel for these civil society organizations to air their positions and views on issues being discussed in key EU bodies and influence decision-making. Through the years, some NGO and civil

society leaders have even won seats in the European Parliament and have directly articulated the views of marginalized sectors in policy discussions through the formal institutional channels.

LATIN AMERICA

Andean Community

The Andean Community (also referred to earlier as Andean Pact, Andean Group or Cartagena Agreement) was established on 26 May 1969 through the Cartagena Agreement mainly as an economic, social and trade cooperation among five South American countries located in the Andes, namely Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru with the lofty goal of improving the standard of living of their peoples. Venezuela later joined in 1973, while Chile withdrew in 1976. In 2006, it was Venezuela's turn to withdraw its membership while Chile re-entered as associate member.

The original Andean Pact countries started with a “closed” economic model that protected national industries and imposed high tariffs on imported products, with the State playing a key role in the economic sphere. As a result of external pressures from the international financial institutions and the debt crisis among its members, the Andean Pact shifted to liberal economic and trade approach in 1989, which defined the Strategies and Work Plans of the regional bloc since then. A free trade area was formed in 1993, through the elimination of tariffs on intra-regional trade, free movement of goods and liberalization of services.

While the neo-liberal economic model has boosted economic and trade growth in the region in the 1990s, the Andean Pact recognized its shortcomings especially in the area of poverty, exclusion and inequality. In 2003, the regional bloc adopted an Integral Plan for Social Development which integrates social aspects in the regional economic integration process. The Work Plan of the Andean Community's Secretariat for 2007 provides for action in the areas of social agenda, environmental agenda, political cooperation, foreign relations, and development of production and trade (CAN website).

Structure and Institutions

The bodies and institutions of the Andean Community evolved through its nearly four decades of existence to constitute the Andean Integration System. In the amendments to the Cartagena Agreement introduced in 1997, the Andean Integration System was established for effective coordination of the institutions and bodies under the Andean Community. It is comprised of the following bodies: Andean Presidential Council, Andean Council of Foreign Ministers, Andean Community Commission, Andean Community General Secretariat, Andean Community Court of Justice, Andean Parliament, Business Advisory Council, The Labor Advisory Council, Andean Development Corporation, the Latin American Reserve Fund, the Social Conventions that join the Andean Integration System, the Simon Bolivar Andean University, the Advisory Councils established by the Commission, and all other bodies and institutions that are created within the framework of Andean sub-regional integration (amended Cartagena Agreement, 1997).

The different bodies under the Andean Integration System meet at least once a year and are supported by the Andean Community General Secretariat based in Lima, Peru. At the top of the hierarchy is the Andean Presidential Council comprised of the heads of states of member-countries. The Andean Community also has its own Andean Community Court of Justice based in Quito and the Andean Parliament based in Bogota whose members are directly elected. The 1997 amendment to the Cartagena Agreement also established a Business Advisory Council and a Labor Advocacy Council as consultative institutions, but did not provide for any formal mechanism for other civil society actors to be part of the decision-making processes.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

The 1997 Cartagena Agreement included a provision for agricultural development programs aimed at boosting common agricultural and agro-industrial development and attaining greater sub-regional food security. The programs are set to improve the living standard of the rural population, meeting the food and nutritional requirements of the population, protection against the risk of food shortages, increase food production, and replace the sub-regions' imports and diversify and increase its exports (Cartagena

Agreement, 1997). The Cartagena Agreement also outlined steps for the Andean Community to attain the objectives that it has set out in agricultural development, which include the creation of the Andean Food Security Systems, joint technological development programs, implementation of joint agricultural programs, creation of sub-regional funding for agricultural development, etc.

To address the problems of poverty, inequity and exclusion despite sub-regional economic and trade growth, the Andean Community adopted the Integral Plan for Social Development in 2004. The Plan lays down an analysis of the key social problems confronting the Andean Community and attempts to present solutions to address these problems through concrete programs such as education and training, employment promotion, prevention of child labor in the area of employment, promotion of fundamental workers' rights; epidemiological surveillance and monitoring, and access to medicine program in the area of health. For rural development and food security, the Plan outlines the programs of the Andean Community which includes financing rural development projects, capacity building and an advocacy program on food security. The Plan also covers the environment and sustainable development which includes a project on the economic valuation and sustainable use of biodiversity, sustainable water resource management.

The Andean Community's Integral Plan for Social Development attempts to provide coherence in the national goals and targets of the member-states under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), aim for harmonization social statistics database, and presents a consolidated list of social development programs and projects being implementation by the members – all of which provide a concrete baseline for future assessment of the Plan's progress towards reaching its set target.

Andean Community and Civil Society

As mentioned above, while the 1997 amendment to the Cartagena Agreement officially established consultation institutions with the business and labor sectors, no such mechanisms have been laid down for other civil society actors specifically for NGOs and social movements.

MERCOSUR

Mercosur, which stands for Mercado Comun del Sur in Spanish, is a regional trade agreement established in 1991 by the Treaty of Asuncion. The founding members of the agreement are Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, with Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru joining later as associate members. It aims to promote free trade and the free movement of goods, peoples and currency in South America. The agreement traces its roots in 1985 when then president of Brazil Jose Sarney and Argentinian president Raul Alfonsin signed the Argentina-Brazil Integration and Economics Cooperation Program, which was later expanded years later to become Mercosur.

Mercosur is discussed here not as a model of regionalism, but to provide a context for the on-going effort in Latin America to establish the South American Community of Nations (CSN), which has later evolved into the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in April 2007, which aims to gradually merge the Andean Community and Mercosur into one towards a unified process of regional integration. The overview of the UNS is discussed in the following section.

Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

The South American Community of Nations, or CSN which stands for its Spanish name Comunidad Sudamericana Naciones, was started in 2004 as a gradual merger of Mercosur and the Andean Community. The general intent of the heads of states of the 12 countries that committed to establish the regional grouping is contained in the Cuzco Declaration signed on 8 December 2004. The Declaration was signed by the members of the Andean Community, namely Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; members of Mercosur, namely Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela; Chile, Guyana and Suriname. The name of the regional grouping was later changed to the Union of South American Nations, or UNASUR which stands for its Spanish name Union de Naciones Suramericanas, at the South American Energy Summit held in April 2007.

The principal mover behind the vision of establishing a Union of South American Nations is strongly pushed by Brazil, under the leadership of its current President Ignacio Lula da Silva. The vision is inspired by the struggles and aspirations of Simon Bolivar, the acknowledged hero of Latin America, who had the goal of creating a federation of nations in the region to promote prosperity and security after independence from Spain.

UNASUR is mainly envisioned as an economic and legislative bloc with a long-term goal is to establish a United States of South America, loosely following the model set by the European Union with a common monetary system, regional parliament and passport for the citizens of the member-states. The grouping has set the year 2019 as the target for the completion of the integration process, particularly the creation of a single market for the region where tariffs for non-sensitive products would have been eliminated by 2014 and those for sensitive products by 2019. The detailed outline and targets for the regional integration will be formally adopted in the next summit of the heads of states in December 2007.

Structure and Institutions

The founding member of UNASUR has initially agreed not to establish any new institutions in the first phase of the integration process and instead utilize existing institutions of Mercosur and the Andean Community in order to cut the bureaucratic processes. A treaty governing the body will be drafted later. A provisional structure, however, has been outlined to coordinate the process of merging CSN and Mercosur and the process of regional integration.

The annual meeting of the heads of states of the member-countries serves the highest political body of UNASUR (formerly, CSN). So far, the heads of states have met three times since the founding of CSN in 2004, with the Presidency rotated among the member-states that also acts as the host for the year. The ministers of foreign affairs of the member-states, responsible for formulating proposals for actions

and decisions by the heads of states, meet twice a year together with the secretary-generals, permanent representatives and heads of committees of Mercosur and the Andean Community. A permanent Secretariat, to be headed by a Secretary General, was agreed to be established in Quito, Ecuador. Ministerial meetings to tackle sectoral or thematic concerns will be convened later by the heads of states, following mechanisms that will be developed based on the existing processes of Mercosur and the Andean Community. The South American Bank will be created later to facilitate the adoption of a common monetary policy, finance development projects and possibly establish a monetary union.

A Commission on Strategic Reflection on the Process of South American Integration (Comision Estrategica de Reflexion sobre el Proceso de Integracion Sudamericano), comprised of 12 members from the member-states, was established to formulate proposals that will facilitate the process of regional integration which will be presented to the heads of states at their subsequent annual meetings.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

None of the initial programs of UNASUR specifically target to benefit the poor sectors in South America. UNASUR's initial concrete steps toward regional integration are in the area of infrastructures, energy and tourism. Under the banner of the Initiative for Infrastructure Integration of South America (IIRSA) funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (AIDB) with contributions from the member-states, the construction of the Inter-Oceanic Highway to connect Peru in the Pacific with Brazil in the Atlantic through Bolivia started in September 2005. The South American Energy Ring which taps the abundant natural gas resources of Peru to supply Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay has started in 2006. Tourism travels up to 90 days of citizens of South American countries have been eased up since 2006, without requiring visa.

UNASUR and Civil Society

None of the documents and agreements of UNASUR, so far, has explicitly acknowledged or referred to the role of civil society and communities in the vision of establishing a Union of South American Nations.

Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA)

The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, ALBA which stands for name in Spanish, is based on a model of political, economic and social integration of countries in the Caribbean and Latin American that share geographic spaces, historical and cultural bonds, necessities and common potentials. It is largely considered as a “counter-culture” in an era of neo liberal-based regionalism models, and as an ideological move to counter the US’ neo-liberal influence in the Caribbean and Latin America. It was initiated by Venezuela under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez and supported by Cuba’s Fidel Castro and later by Bolivia’s Evo Morales in 2004. Like UNASUR, the vision behind ALBA is also inspired by the independence struggles led by Simon Bolivar, the hero of Latin America.

ALBA is a new scheme of integration based on the principles of cooperation, solidarity and complementarity, presented as an alternative to the neo liberal model. It addresses the obstacles that prevent true integration such as the poverty and the social exclusion; the unequal interchange and the lack of equity conditions in the international relations, the free access to the information, to the technology and to the knowledge; it aspires to construct consensuses, to rethink the agreements of integration based on reaching a national and regional endogenous development to eradicate the poverty, to correct the social inequalities and to assure and to increase life quality for all the countries.

ALBA laid down the following objectives in To promote the fight against the poverty

1. To preserve the autonomy and Latin American identity
2. The transference of technology, the technical assistance
3. The formation of human resources

4. To prioritize national companies as public beings suppliers
5. The agreements could not be obstacle to the diffusion of the scientific and technological progress
6. To face the abuse of the monopolies and oligopolies through effective mechanisms that assure fair competition
7. The foreign investors will not be able to demand the countries by the handling of state monopolies of public interest
8. Treatment special and differentiated to unequal economies to open opportunities to the weakest
9. Process of wide social participation, which can be characterized like democratic
10. Economic, social, cultural and civil rights should be interdependent, indivisible and can not be waived
11. The commercial interests of the investors will not be able to have supremacy over the human rights or over the sovereignty of the States
12. Creation of funds of structural convergence for the correction of asymmetries

Cooperation among the members of ALBA is governed by the following principles which are focused in correcting the inequalities in society:

1. Focuses attention on the fight against the poverty and the social exclusion
2. Crucial importance to the human rights, labor rights, the woman rights, and to the defense of the atmosphere and physical integration
3. Fight against the protectionist policies and the ruinous subsidies of the industrialized countries
4. For the poor countries, where the agricultural activity is fundamental, the conditions of life of million farmers and natives would be seen irreversibly affected if it happens a flood of imported agricultural goods, still in the cases in which subsidy does not exist.
5. The agricultural production is much more than the production of merchandise, is the base to preserve cultural options, is a form of occupation of the territory, defines modalities of relation with the nature and has to directly do with the security and nourishing self-sufficiency. In these countries agriculture is, rather, a way of life and it cannot be treated like any other economic activity.
6. ALBA must attack the obstacles integration from its roots:

- a. The poverty of most of the population;
 - b. The deep inequalities and asymmetries between countries;
 - c. Unequal Interchange and conditions of international relations;
 - d. The weight of an “impossible to pay” debt;
 - e. The imposition of the policies of structural adjustment of the IMF and the WB and the rigid rules of the WTO that undermines the bases of social and political support;
 - f. Obstacles to access information, the knowledge and the technology that are derived from the present agreements of intellectual property; and
 - g. To pay attention to the problems that affect the consolidation of a true democracy, such as the monopolized social mass media
7. To face such a call Reformation of the State that only took us to unfair processes of deregulation, privatization and disassembling of the capacities of public management
 8. Strengthening of the State and governments, on the bases of the participation of the citizen in public matters
 9. To question the vindication to the free market and commerce, as if only these concepts were enough to automatically guarantee the advance towards greater levels of growth and collective well-being.
 10. Without a clear intervention of the State directed to reduce the disparities between countries, the free competition between unequal countries will lead us to make the damage of weakest worst
 11. To deepen in Latin American integration requires an economic agenda defined by the sovereign States, outside all ominous influence of the international organisms

Structure and Institutions

The alternative regionalism model that ALBA espouses has yet to be supported by corresponding structures and mechanisms for implementation. So far, cooperation among the three countries that comprise it is primarily based on transfer of technologies and exchange or sharing of human resources, such as the deployment of Cuban in Bolivia and Venezuela. Barter of goods is another key feature of the model, with Venezuela committing to send oil to Cuba in exchange of sugarcane and other agricultural products.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

The following initiatives were identified as the priority of the trilateral cooperation:

1. Fight against poverty and social exclusion
2. Joint actions on food security
3. Joint power and mining development
4. Portfolio of integrated investments
5. Academic and cultural interchange
6. Tourism
7. Environmental conservation
8. Caribbean regional market
9. Prevention and management of disasters

There are no available references in the internet on the status of actual implementation of these priorities for cooperation that would allow the Researcher to analyze whether the concepts and identified priorities are translated into activities and projects and how they actually impact on the lives of the marginalized sectors. Monitoring the progress and implementation of ALBA is one area that civil society should focus on in the years to come, especially to show that an alternative approach to and concept of regionalism could work.

ALBA and Civil Society

While ALBA's objectives and principles are considered as ideal foundation of regionalism and widely supported by the civil society movement worldwide, it has yet to establish concrete mechanisms for direct people participation.

Trade Treaty of the Peoples (TCP)

The Trade Treaty of the Peoples, or TCP for its Spanish acronym, was initiated by President Evo Morales of Bolivia when he assumed power in January 2006. Morales is the first president of Bolivia who comes from the indigenous population that comprise the majority of the country's people. He pushed for an alternative trade agreement shortly after he was swept to power by an overwhelming majority of Bolivia's voters in a democratic election and was pressured to sign on to a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US which was previously negotiated by his predecessor with strong lobby from the business community. Bolivia's neighbor and biggest market for its soya export, Colombia, was the first Andean country to sign an FTA agreement with the US, adversely pitting Bolivia's soya farmers with the heavily-subsidized soya imports from the US. Morales then declared in February 2006 that his country does need an FTA but a "people's trade agreement".

TCP is intended as an offensive trade agreement meant to counter the mainstream neo-liberal trade agreements that are sweeping Latin America. It places the interests of the poor sectors of society at the forefront of the trade agenda. Like ALBA, it is based on the Andean principles of solidarity, complementarity, reciprocity and co-existence with nature, that sharply contrast the core value of neo-liberal trade regimes founded on competition and extraction and exploitation of resources to promote economic benefits of a few. Unlike ALBA which is broadly encompassing, TCP presents an alternative trade and investment model to address the inequity in society and the economic marginalization of the majority in the era of economic globalization and trade liberalization. Like ALBA, Bolivia's TCP is also intended to serve as counterpoint to the neo-liberal ideology behind mainstream free trade agreements. It purports to integrate into the trade debate the principles of complementarity, cooperation, solidarity, reciprocity, prosperity and respect for countries' sovereignty, to ensure that trade integration does not serve the market but leads to the effective reduction of poverty, preservation of indigenous communities and respect for the environment.

TCP puts forward the following principles that directly counter the values of the neo-liberal agenda:

- the State has the right to subordinate trade agreements to their own long-term vision of national development and to use “protectionist” measures to achieve this;
- the human right to water and basic services comes above the rights of multinational companies;
- trade agreements should seek solidarity and complementarity rather than competition and overexploitation; and
- trade agreements should protect and support small community-based enterprises.

TCP joined forces with ALBA in May 2006. The ALBA-TCP Agreement provides concrete contributions of each country to the development to each other, providing details of the concrete contribution of each in the cooperation. The formal joint Communiqué on the “Agreement to the Application of ALBA and the Trade Treaty of the People” entered into by Presidents Morales, Chavez and Castro laid down specific commitments on the part of each government-Parties. The Agreement identified specific areas of cooperation between the three countries, even going into the specifics on what each country can offer to the other two countries. Venezuela, for example, has offered to share its rich oil and gas with Cuba and Bolivia in exchange for the volunteer doctors and medical workers being extended by Cuba to both. Bolivia too offered to share its forest and agricultural resources to Cuba and Venezuela, in exchange for the human and natural resources being extended by both. The Agreement is very notable for it fosters a unique form cooperation among nations through barter or exchange of services and goods that each country can offer according to their own specific capacity and resources. Such barter exchange is actually reminiscent of the form of cooperation among Socialist countries during the Cold War, which was highly criticized by the West for contradicting the core principles of the free market ideology but has proven to have provided the basic needs of the people such as ensuring basic commodities and access to basic services such as health and education.

Similar to ALBA, there is no adequate reference available in the internet to serve as basis for analysis of the status of the actual implementation of TCP since it only started a few years ago. The development and actual performance of the TCP (and ALBA) in the coming years, especially in addressing the basic

needs of the marginal sectors of society are very crucial in setting a global trend on the transformation of the concept of regionalism and in evolving new approaches that are outside the aegis of the neo-liberal economic integration approach that dominates regionalism schemes around the world at present.

AFRICA

South Africa Development Cooperation (SADC)

The South African Development Cooperation (SADC) was originally formed in 1980 as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) whose main aim was to coordinate development projects in the region to lessen economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa. SADCC was a loose alliance of nine black majority-ruled states in Southern Africa, namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The regional grouping was later transformed into the present SADC in August 1992. Its member-states expanded beyond the original nine SADCC members to include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia and the Republic of South Africa. Its vision is “a common future, a future in a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa. This shared vision is anchored on the common values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the peoples of Southern Africa”.

SADC is guided by the principles of (a) Sovereign equality of all Member States; b) Solidarity, peace and security; c) Human rights, democracy, and the rule of law; d) Equity, balance and mutual benefit; and e) Peaceful settlement of disputes. These principles serve as the foundation of its objectives as laid down in the SADC Treaty:

1. Achieve development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration;
2. Evolve common political values, systems and institutions;
3. Promote and defend peace and security;
4. Promote self-sustaining development on the basis of collective self-reliance, and the interdependence of Member States;
5. Achieve complementarity between national and regional strategies and programs;
6. Promote and maximize productive employment and utilization of resources of the Region;
7. Achieve sustainable utilization of natural resources and effective protection of the environment;
8. Strengthen and consolidate the long standing historical, social and cultural affinities and links among the people of the Region.

To attain its objectives, the grouping has adopted the following strategies:

1. Harmonize the members' political and socio-economic policies and plans of Member States;
2. Encourage the people of the Region and their institutions to take initiatives to develop economic, social and cultural ties across the Region, and to participate fully in the implementation of the programs and projects of SADC;
3. Create appropriate institutions and mechanisms for the mobilization of requisite resources for the implementation of programs and operations of SADC and its Institutions;
4. Develop policies aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labor, goods and services, and of the people of the Region generally, among Member States;
5. Promote the development of human resources;
6. Promote the development, transfer and mastery of technology;
7. Improve economic management and performance through regional co-operation;
8. Promote the coordination and harmonization of the international relations of Member States;
9. Secure international understanding, co-operation and support, and mobilize the inflow of public and private resources into the Region;

10. Develop such other activities as Member States may decide in furtherance of the objectives of this Treaty.

SADC members work mainly in the area of food security, land and agriculture; infrastructure and services; industry, trade, investment and finance; human resources development, science and technology; natural resources and environment; social welfare, information and culture; and politics, diplomacy, international relations, peace and security.

There is generally weak synergy between the principles and objectives of the SADC on one hand, and its programs on the other. While the principles and objectives of the SADC appear to encompass the economic, political, socio-cultural and environment spheres, regional cooperation and integration in Southern Africa is largely focused on the economic and trade agenda. The SADC has laid down the following goals for its economic integration agenda: creation of a free trade area by 2008, establishment of a customs union by 2010, establishment of a common market by 2015, and the establishment of a common monetary union by 2016. These goals largely follow the pattern set by the European Union for its economic and monetary integration, albeit within a much shorter timeline of 10 years.

Structure and Institutions

The Summit of Heads of State is at the apex of the SADC institutions. Since 1999, the Summit follows the troika system set by the EU comprised of the current, past and succeeding presidencies. The Summit is supported by a structure led by the Council of Ministers composed of the Ministers of economic planning or finance of the member-states, which reflect the economic-orientation of the regional bloc. The Integrated Committee of Ministers ensures policy guidance and coordination over the programs of the different Commissions. There is also a Standing Committee of Officials composed of Permanent Secretaries or officials from economic planning or finance, and an Organ on Politics, Defense and Security which was created in 2000. The structure is supported by a Secretariat, as well as a Tribunal to ensure adherence and proper interpretation of the SADC Treaty.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

The SADC has a Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) that coordinates the regional body's programs and activities related to food and agriculture, but particularly dealing with harmonization of agricultural policies and programs. Its focus is ensuring food availability, safety, access and nutritional value, preparedness for food crisis, and the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources. It is involved in the development of measures to increase agricultural output and the development of agro-based industries in southern African countries, as well as promotion of trade in agricultural products.

The FANR has programs on agricultural research and development, agricultural information management, crop and livestock development, natural resources management, and environment and sustainable development. SADC's activities and projects under these programs are mainly focused on capacity building and institutional building among its members-countries.

The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) is the main blueprint for SADC's strategic development. The plan is based on a 15-year regional integration framework that ensures effective sectoral linkages and enhance synergy amongst sectors, and provide member states and regional and international institutions with a coherent and comprehensive long term implementation agenda, among others. The RISDP provides only for the general goals of SADC's interventions in food, agriculture and natural resources, without any specific reference to programs that will address the needs of the marginal sectors.

SADC and Civil Society

The SADC Treaty has specific provision on NGOs (Sec. 23), which makes it different from most regionalism schemes. The Treaty specifically states that the SADC "shall seek to involve fully, the people of the Region and NGOs in the process of regional integration" and that "SADC shall co-operate with, and support the initiatives of the peoples of the Region and NGOs, contributing to the objectives of this Treaty in the areas

of co-operation in order to foster closer relations among the communities, associations and people of the Region.”

SADC, in collaboration with key civil society organization in the Southern Africa has set up a parallel civil society called the South Africa Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN).

African Union (AU)

Officially established in 2001, or more than 20 years after the Southern African states formed the SADCC (the precursor of the present SADC) is the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was later replaced by the African Union (AU) in July 2000. The AU has the biggest number of members among existing regionalism models, with the 53 Member-States of OAU as its founding members. It also has the largest geographic span and size among all regional groupings.

The founding members of the AU consider regional integration as a “crucial catalyst for Africa’s renaissance”. Its major goal is the establishment of the African Economic Community “to promote socio-economic development and face more effectively the challenges of globalization”. The AU’s major vehicle for regional integration is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) which was adopted by the member-states in 2001.

The AU is guided by the following fundamental principles laid down in the Lome Declaration of 2000:

1. Sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union;
2. Respect of borders existing on achievement of independence;
3. Participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union;
4. Establishment of a common defence policy for the African Continent;
5. Peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly;

6. Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States;
7. Non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another;
8. The right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity;
9. Peaceful co-existence of Member States and their right to live in peace and security;
10. The right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security;
11. Promotion of self-reliance within the framework of the Union;
12. Promotion of gender equality;
13. Respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance;
14. Promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development;
15. Respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities;
16. Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments.

The Lome Declaration establishing the AU outlines its objectives as follows:

1. Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa;
2. Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States;
3. Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
4. Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples;
5. Encourage international cooperation,
6. Promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
7. Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance;
8. Promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;
9. Establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations;

10. Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;
11. Promote co-operation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples;
12. Coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union;
13. Advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology; and
14. Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent.

The AU has adopted a Strategic Framework to operationalize its objectives. The mechanisms of the Strategic Framework are still evolving.

Structure and Institutions

The AU structure is headed by the Assembly of the Union comprised of the heads of states, supported by the Executive Council, the African Commission, Permanent Representatives Committee and Specialized Technical Committees. As a young regional organization, some part of its organizational structure has yet to become operational, such as the Pan-African Parliament and the Court of Justice. It has an Economic, Social and Cultural Council that serves as an advisory organ composed of social and professional groups. In the future, the AU envisions to establish key financial institutions such as the African Central Bank, Monetary Fund and Investment Fund.

Most of the elements of regionalism based on solidarity and cooperation are present in the principles and objectives of the AU, although the environment was notably left out. The Strategic Framework recognizes the “need for citizens’ ownership of African integration and the “total involvement of the peoples in integration endeavors”.

Development of the AU is largely dependent on the funds provide by the EU where most of the former colonial powers in Africa come from.

The resolve of the AU to translate its principles into reality faces a series of challenges in the political and economic spheres such as the:

- Genocide in Darfur, the Sudan
- Political and economic situation in Zimbabwe
- Fragile truce between Eritrea and Ethiopia
- Outsider-imposed Green Revolution in Africa

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

The AU's flagship program in tackling widespread poverty and hunger in the African continent is the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), hailed as the "Vision and Strategic Framework for African's Renewal". It is interesting to note that NEPAD actually preceded the existence of the AU, with its original mandate coming from the AU's predecessor, the OAU. NEPAD was developed by the five initiating heads of states of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa who were mandated by the OAU to develop an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa which was then adopted by the body in July 2001. The AU later adopted NEPAD as it banner program in 2002 and later formally integrated NEPAD into the AU's structures and processes through the Maputo Declaration in 2003.

NEPAD's major objectives are the (1) eradication of poverty in Africa; (2) ensuring sustainable growth and development of African countries and the continent, (3) halting the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process and enhancing its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; and (4) accelerating the empowerment of women. Its programs and activities are founded on the principles of good governance, African ownership and leadership, anchoring Africa's development on its resources and the resourcefulness of its peoples, partnership among African peoples, acceleration of regional and

continental integration, building Africa's competitiveness, forging international partnership that elevates Africa's status, and linking partnerships to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

NEPAD covers a broad array of programs and activities addressing the key priorities set by the AU consistent with its objectives towards addressing poverty in Africa and attaining the continent's Renewal. Agriculture is at the top of NEPAD's partnership, through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) as its main vehicle. The CAADP, formulated with the technical assistance of the FAO and officially adopted by the AU in 2003, provides the blueprint and flagship projects for Africa's agricultural development at the national, regional and continental levels.

CAADP is designed to stand on four legs geared towards the strategic development of Africa's agricultural sector by 2015 (FAO, 2004). The first component involves extending the areas under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems to enable farmers to cultivate high-yielding crops, which requires an investment of US\$37 billion. The second component, which requires the highest investment at US\$92 billion, is the improvement of rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access, which also involves strengthening the capacity of African governments in trade negotiations and meeting international trade standards. The third leg is increasing food supply and reducing hunger targeting 15 million small farms for access to improved technology and services, for which US\$7.5 billion is allocated. The last component involves additional investment for disaster preparedness and early warning capacity, which would need a US\$34.5 billion investment.

AU and Civil Society

Officially, the Pan-African Parliament is regarded by the AU as the key channel for African peoples participation in the AU as members of the Parliament will be directly voted by the people in the future. Like the EU which served as the main model emulated by the AU, the latter also has its own Economic, Social and Cultural Council whose mandate will be determined by the Assembly of the Union (Heads of State). Following the example of the EU, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council is expected to serve

as a platform for civil society movements and interests to present their views on policies and decisions of the AU.

ASIA

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established on 8 December 1985 by the heads of state Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan officially became a member in April 2007. It is considered as the largest regional model in terms of population, with a combined population of more than 1.5 billion people, two-thirds of whom live in India.

The proposal that led to the founding of SAARC was originally put forward in the late 70s by then President of Bangladesh Ziaur Rahman who vouched for the establishment of trade bloc the region. President Ziaur Rahman was a top-ranking army general who became Bangladesh's sixth president in a military coup in 1977. He was right-wing politician who founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, he brought Islam into Bangladesh's Constitution and established free-market policies during his term. Due to the continuing political conflicts in the region, namely the frictions between India and Pakistan, and the insurgency crises in Sri Lanka and Nepal, it took a number of years before the idea came into fruition. The Declaration on South Asian Regional Cooperation was adopted in New Delhi in August 1983, outlining the five key areas of cooperation, namely Agriculture and Rural Development; Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Meteorology; Health and Population; Transport; and Human Resource Development. Activities and programs in these areas are coordinated by high-level Committees within the regional body. Areas of cooperation in the SAARC agenda were later expanded to include Information and Communications Technology, Biotechnology, Intellectual Property Rights, Tourism and Energy, each of which are coordinated by Technical Working Groups.

SAARC was envisioned to provide a “platform for the peoples of South Asia to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding”, and aims to accelerate the process of economic and social development in Member States.

The SAARC Charter outlines the following objectives for the regional cooperation:

- to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
- to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials;
- to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia;
- to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another’s problems;
- to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;
- to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
- to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and
- to cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

The South Asian regional cooperation is guided by the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.

Curiously, the SAARC Charter limits the strategic potentials of the cooperation in regional integration when it explicitly stated that the grouping shall not be a substitute for and shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.

Consistent with the principles that the member-states collectively embraced, SAARC is widely regarded as highly ineffective in implementing its goals regional integration in South Asia. As a collective body, it has failed to address the series of and on-going political and military conflicts in the region, particularly the disputes between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir region, as well as address the internal conflicts in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

In the area of economic integration, which is the key reason for its existence as a regional bloc, the SAARC adopted the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) in Islamabad in 2004 to provide a framework for the creation of a South Asian Free Trade Area. The SAFTA entered into force in 2006, with commitment from its developing country members to bring down their duties to 20 percent within two years and to 0-5 percent within five years. The Agreement binds the least-developed country members of the SAARC to reduce their tariffs to 30 percent within two years and to 0-5 percent within eight years.

SAFTA is anchored on exchange of tariff, para-tariff and non-tariff concessions among its member-states in fostering and enhancing mutual trade and economic cooperation in the region. It aims to eliminate trade barriers among its member-states, promote fair competition, create effective mechanisms for implementation, and provide a framework for further regional cooperation. It established the SAFTA Ministerial Council (SMC), consists of the Ministers of Commerce or Trade of the member-states, which oversees the implementation of the Agreement. The SMC is supported by a Committee of Experts (COE) comprised of high-level trade officials that provides expert support to the work of the SMC and also acts as the Dispute Settlement Body of the SAFTA.

The SAFTA was preceded by an earlier agreement in 1993 to gradually reduce tariffs, which was barely implemented mainly due to the trade rivalry between India and Pakistan. Amidst the discussions on trade liberalization and openness at the regional level, India has initiated bilateral trade agreements with other members of the SAARC, except Pakistan and Bangladesh.

SAARC has granted Observer status to its key international trading partners, namely the US, EU, Japan, South Korea, Iran and China. Russia and Myanmar are also seeking to be recognized as Observers in the coming SAARC Summits, while China and Iran have expressed interests to join the regional body.

Structure and Institutions

The SAARC structure basically follows the regionalism model set by its regional neighbor in the southeast, the ASEAN. At the top of the structure is the meeting or the summit of the Heads of States, supported by a Council of Ministers and a Standing Committee comprised of top officials of the foreign affairs ministries of the member-states. The substantive work are actually done by various Technical Committees, Working Groups and by the SAARC Secretariat based in Katmandu.

The SAARC claims to provide forums for people-to-people contacts in South Asia, but the mechanisms provided for this purpose gives a different definition of what “people” means in this context. Key mechanisms for people-to-people interactions, as described in the official SAARC website, include the Association of Speakers and Parliamentarians comprised of legislators and heads of the legislative branch in the member-states, as well as professional bodies. The SAARC gives accreditation to professional bodies, corporate organizations and other non-governmental actors to be recognized either as Apex bodies or Recognized bodies.

Agenda for the Poor Sectors

A priority area for cooperation in the SAARC is on Agriculture and Rural Development, as defined by the regional body from the time of its formation. A Technical Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development supervises the implementation of the SAARC’s programs in these key areas which are seen to have direct impacts on the lives of the region’s poor sectors. The work of the Technical Committee is guided by the Regional Integrated Program of Action (RIFA) which includes programs on thematic areas of cooperation related to agriculture and rural development such as water, milk production, rural development volunteers, and food security. The SAARC has a number of technical cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as well as regional research institutions to address problems in agriculture such as pest management, food security and transboundary animal diseases.

Inspired by the concept of a regional food reserve mechanism adopted by the ASEAN in 1977, the SAARC adopted its own Regional Food Security Reserve in 1988. Similar to its counterpart in Southeast Asia, the SAARC's Food Security Reserve was largely non-operational despite the food grain commitments from the member-states. The SAARC Food Bank was established in 2004 in an attempt to operationalize the Food Security Reserve. The Agreement establishing the SAARC Food Bank was signed in April 2007, aimed to serve the needs of member-states in times of food shortages and emergencies, provide support on the food security efforts of countries, promote partnerships and cooperation in food security, and solve regional food shortages through collective actions. The Food Bank will start with a stock of nearly 250,000 tons of rice and wheat earmarked by the member-states under the original Food Security Reserve scheme.

The Food Bank introduced mechanisms into the old Food Security Reserve such as setting the guidelines for the determination of price of the food stocks to be obtained by one member-state from another, rationalizing the procedures for withdrawal and release of food stocks, and a more active role for the Food Bank Board and designated nodal points. The impacts of the Food Bank are expected to be seen starting this year, especially with the food emergencies resulting from the widespread floods that hit Bangladesh and some parts of India recently.

SAARC and Civil Society

The SAARC Peoples Forum is a coalition of non-government organizations involved in environment, development, women issues, human rights, issues of trafficking in women and children, livelihood and food security in South Asia. It is a civil society process held in parallel with the annual SAARC Summit since 2001. It is convened to provide a forum for the region's people to present their views on development issues and to influence government policies in the SAARC member-countries. The Forum is organized and hosted by leading NGOs and peoples' organizations South Asia, depending on the venue of the SAARC Summit every year.

REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS FROM EXISTING REGIONALISM MODELS

The regionalism models tackled in this study were all initiated and led by states as the movers, key actors, decision-makers and implementers of the regional agreements adopted by the member-states. Despite the rhetoric of some on being people-centered and oriented, all models are state-centered and state-oriented, with very limited mechanism for direct participation and involvement of the people in attaining the set visions of regional cooperation and integration. This is true even for the EU which is the most mature and considered as most sophisticated among the regionalism models analyzed in this study. The sophistication of the EU's model of regionalism could actually be gleaned on how it has formally integrated civil society into its structures and institutions, putting together the interests of industry/business, workers and other civil society stakeholders in one mechanism which effectively fits the interests with each other that ultimately comes out with common positions that water down the most progressive views.

Even the self-proclaimed alternative models to regional integration such as ALBA and TCP, are state-centered with no clear mechanisms for direct participation of the peoples in formulating the vision, objectives and principles, decision-making and implementation. TCP claims to be the product of consultations with the marginalized sectors, but there are no available references to support that and there are no mechanisms adopted by the Bolivian government to ensure that the views of the marginalized sectors are taken into account in the development of the alternative regional integration model that the government is promoting. Being new and still evolving as alternative approaches to regionalism, ALBA and TCP have the highest possibility of adopting mechanisms and processes that would operationalize people's participation in regional governance.

Overall, the regional models analyzed for this study remain top-down, based on the premise that the state represent the people, will take care of the needs of the people and will protect the people's interests. Beyond the rhetoric, the participatory element of regionalism is not translated into concrete mechanisms for peoples' participation.

Each model of regionalism studied is a clear product of its respective history and context. The earlier models, such as the EU and the ASEAN, started out mainly as an attempt to establish peace and security within the region and to address on-going disputes among some of its member-states, such as the post-World War II conflicts between some Western European countries in the case of the EU and the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation for ASEAN. The international political and security climate is also an important factor that shapes the formation of regional formations like the ASEAN, where the US' policy to arrest the expansion of China's communist influence in Southeast Asia was a key motivation. Most of the mainstream regionalism models, particularly those in Africa, are basically following the path taken by the EU, without much consideration of the vastly different history and contexts. The model exemplified by the EU is expectedly alienating and detached from peoples' realities when exported into the contexts of the present-day developing countries. The EU 60 years ago can hardly be compared with the present-day developing countries, and its history and cultural heritage are incomparable. The international, regional and national contexts, particularly in the economic and political spheres have no comparison and therefore would require a totally different model and scheme of regional integration.

The replication of the ASEAN model by the SAARC in South Asia is another interesting case in point. The SAARC which came nearly 20 years after the birth of the ASEAN has virtually patterned its structures, institutions, decisions-making processes and even early programs after the ASEAN's. The Food Security Reserve scheme of SAARC, for example, is a mirror image of the ASEAN's which was adopted 10 years earlier. Expectedly, the SAARC model also replicated the same mistakes of the ASEAN food reserve model which largely existed only in paper. Interestingly, the SAARC recognized its mistake faster than the ASEAN by reviewing the scheme 15 years after it was adopted and introducing substantial changes into the scheme in an attempt to make it relevant and operational in responding to food shortages and emergencies in the member-states. While SAARC has moved on to establishing a Food Bank that hopes to be more beneficial than the original Food Security Reserve scheme, the ASEAN chose to drag its feet in addressing the errors in the scheme which it has acknowledged as not operational. A key reason for the SAARC's more active action in the food security theme is the reality that majority of the region's people are among the world's most food-deficit population, which is not the case in their more food-abundant Southeast Asian neighbors.

Among the models studied for this research, the EU can be regarded as the one that has best adapted to the challenges of the changing political, economic and socio-cultural environment within and outside the region over the years. It has defined and redefined its thrusts and focus throughout its history, from a regional cooperation to establish peace and cooperation among its members to an internationally-influential political bloc, from a trade cooperation scheme in the steel industry that deals mostly with war materiel to single custom and monetary systems that it is today. Compared to its counterparts in the developing countries, the comparable economic and financial capacities among its members allowed the EU to focus its efforts in regional integration without being saddled by the responsibility to ensure that everyone reaches a certain level of economic development. The harmonization of standards in the EU was done in a context where the levels of economic development among the members are not widely different, since most of the EU member-countries, especially its oldest members, were colonizer countries that have accumulated national wealth by exploiting the natural resources of their former colonies that served as the base for their respective economic and political powers.

A striking reflection from the review of alternative regionalism models done for this study is the fact that common/regional identity remains as crucial factor for coherence of any regionalism model. This assertion is clearly demonstrated in the experience and history of the EU as THE regional integration scheme for European countries. The sense of “Europe-ness” or being European is very dominant in its objectives, programs and schemes from its early years. The same can be said about the regional integration schemes in Latin America, being strongly founded on the general acceptance of cultural oneness as Latin American or “Latino”. So with the African schemes exemplified by the SADC and the AU which are both based on the sense of being an African. The AU even went further by explicitly recognizing that the historical past of Africa as an exploited continent and its members as former colonies, as an important tie that binds that regional union. The SAARC as a regional bloc for South Asia is also based on that recognition of a common regional identity, although it is not as explicitly stated like in the Latin American and African regional integration schemes. The political tensions between the biggest and most influential member-states of the SAARC, namely India and Pakistan, also dilutes the common regional identity behind the grouping. But there is no doubt that culturally, South Asians consider themselves as distinct from the rest of Asia and that is a key rationale behind the creation of the SAARC.

A very notable observation on the subject of common regional identity as a fundamental principle and cohesion basis is the fact that such is not very distinct and not even explicit in the case of the ASEAN. There is recognition of a “Southeast Asian identity” in view of the diversity of cultures in the sub-region. There is no common language that binds the countries in Southeast Asia, and there is very little shared culture or common history to speak of. The history of cooperation among the countries in Southeast Asia are limited to neighboring countries within the sub-region, such as among those located in Indo-China (Thailand, Lao PRD, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar) and also those in the Borneo area (Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines).

The geographical characteristics of Southeast Asia are a key factor behind this, with its combination of islands and continental components which partly defined the extent and nature of relations among the countries throughout history. The different colonial influences in Southeast Asia could also partly explain this, with no particular colonial interest dominating the region unlike the case in Latin America or in Africa which was distinctly distributed among major colonizers. As a result, the levels of development among the countries in Southeast Asia are much more diverse, with such countries as Singapore and Malaysia attaining higher level of economic development in one hand and least developed countries like Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia on the other.

The lack of, or unclear, common cultural identity is a key challenge for the evolution of ASEAN into a regional integration model that serves the interest of the Southeast Asian people beyond state-centered and state-imposed regional economic integration that it is now. Understandably, the lack of a strong common identity that binds the region into a cohesive bloc to which the people strongly identify themselves with, requires top-down and state-centered interventions in order to work. The lofty points of unity, not anchored on strong cultural and historical ties, also explain the failure of the ASEAN to come up with common positions on key development issues that affect transboundary interests such as trade and environment. Without a strong sense of identity at its core, conflicting national interests and competition are too strong a force to overcome in the name of regional integration.

Proposals for Alternative Regionalism: Towards a Pro-People, Pro-Poor and Participatory Regionalism

Learning from the lessons culled from the various experiences of regionalism covered in this research, this section will explore options for alternative regionalism for Southeast Asia. The options presented are based on the following Principles that are envisioned to serve the interests of the poor and marginalized sectors that comprise the majority of the peoples in Southeast Asia, namely:

Strong sense of common identity

As explained in the earlier section, regionalism should be anchored on a strong sense and recognition of a common identity that binds the member-countries together. Such common identity may be based on cultural affinity, shared history and geographic proximity which are much more fundamental than agreed goals and common agenda among the members. That common identity should be the core “glue” that should bind the regional bloc through challenges that it will collectively face, especially in the face of economic competition and political tensions. Ownership by the people of an alternative regionalism scheme starts from the recognition and acceptance of that shared identity as a region, which could potentially subsume national interest or even national identity.

Cooperation and solidarity based on equity, peace and justice

Cooperation in an alternative regionalism model should be based on the principles of equity, peace and justice. Such cooperation need not be limited to economic and financial relations, but should respond to each other’s needs and capacities. The model set out by ALBA-TCP in promoting regional cooperation in the form of exchange or barter of services and resources according to the capacity of each member and in response to the actual needs of the other members is remarkable and worth emulating.

An alternative regionalism model should move away from market-based regional integration that does not take into account the principles of fairness and social justice.

People's participation and empowerment in decision-making

The paradigm behind an alternative regionalism model should be based on the recognition of the power, capacities and participation of the people in decision-making, beyond being targets of the benefits of regional integration. Processes, structures and mechanisms that make up the regional governance should incorporate the participation of the different sectors of society and civil society at all stages, and with their participation in the formulation of such mechanisms for participation. Strong involvement of the people in regional governance ensures political ownership as well as ensures the endogenous development of approaches and responses to common challenges.

Accountability and transparency

The accountability of any regional governance institution should be directly to the people that make up the base and core of regionalism. Mechanisms to ensure accountability should be put in place, along with systems of citizen's redress vis-à-vis states. In the same way, mechanism for transparency, particularly access to information by the people, should be instituted.

Addressing the basic needs of the people

An alternative regionalism scheme should serve the actual needs and interests of the people, not of states. Interventions and programs should respond to the actual situation and needs of the people, not on the availability or supply of such services and goods. In this light, the model started by ALBA and TCP in prioritizing the basic needs of the people such as ensuring food security and availability, accessibility of

basic services such as health and education, and providing basic infrastructures in agriculture and local livelihood are worth emulating.

Based on people's control over and rights to productive resources

Alternative regionalism should ensure that the people retain control over productive resources, such as land and water, mineral and forest resources. Regional integration should protect the people's interests on such productive resources as the key foundation for providing sustainable and decent livelihood, food security and economic sovereignty.

Recognition of human rights and fundamental rights of basic sectors

Protection of the basic human rights and fundamental rights of the basic sectors should be an integral component of any alternative regionalism model. The right of local producers over productive resources such as land, should be respected. The rights of indigenous communities over their ancestral lands should be recognized, as embodied in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Principles of sustainable development: inter-generational equity, Precautionary Principle

Alternative regionalism should be guided by the sustainable development framework, based on the interlocking pillars of economic, social and environment which cannot be separated from each other. Cooperation and interventions should respect inter-generational equity and environmental sustainability guided by the Precautionary Principle.

Sharing of appropriate and environmentally-sustainable technologies

Genuine cooperation anchored on shared identity as a region should incorporate the sharing of appropriate and environmentally-sustainable technologies that respond to the actual needs and conditions of the people.

A people-oriented regionalism model must have concrete and strategic programs addressing the concrete needs of the poor sectors across the region. The African Union's NEPAD whose core program is the CAADP is an example of how regional cooperation can attempt to address the problems of small-scale producers and subsistent farmers. The SAARC's regional integrated framework in agriculture and rural development is another example, albeit less strategically designed than the CAADP of the AU. Both development blueprints, however, were designed and developed without the participation of the poor sectors that are targeted to benefit from the implementation of those programs.

These principles may be translated into action through collaboration under various options for civil society organizations for consider in promoting alternative regionalism. "Alternative regionalism" may have different connotations. Strictly speaking, "alternative regionalism" is any effort that will present a different formula from what is currently practiced, which involves elements that veer away from the dominant regionalism schemes, as described this section.

OPTIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN BUILDING PEOPLE-ORIENTED AND PARTICIPATORY ALTERNATIVE REGIONALISM

Dreaming on an alternative regionalism model and identifying the elements and principles that should comprise it is the easy part. What is difficult and where the real effort should be is on how to make such model happen, especially in a world where the dominant models present a case in contrast in nearly all aspects. How to bring about an alternative regionalism model is a big challenge that civil society should

collectively address. As the key actor in society that serves as an effective counterpoint to business/industry and engages with the government to bring about policies and interventions that respond to the needs of the people, civil society is in the best position to plant the seeds for the adoption of alternative models and approaches regionalism.

This section provides three options for civil society organizations to explore in building models and approaches for alternative regionalism based on the principles and elements laid down in the previous section.

Option 1: Developing Alternative Regionalism through More Democratic Participation and Engagement with the ASEAN

This option is largely based on state-led approach to regionalism, but based on a genuine recognition of the role of civil society in development and providing for effective mechanisms for direct participation of civil society organizations and communities in regional governance.

One concrete example of this approach is that initiated by the Solidarity for Asian Peoples' Advocacy (SAPA), an informal network of peoples' organizations and NGOs from across Asia aimed at promoting advocacies on development issues affecting Asia as well as facilitating engagements of civil society organizations with relevant institutions in the region. As part of its core advocacies, SAPA initiated a serious engagement with the ASEAN by actively participating in the consultations that later led to the adoption of the ASEAN Charter. SAPA provided the venue for civil society organizations to engage the ASEAN on diverse issues covered in the Charter as well as the programs and activities of the ASEAN, taking advantage of whatever available spaces, forums opportunities for such engagement.

By closely engaging the ASEAN as a regional institution and making the ASEAN and the governments aware of an active civil society effort to pressure the institution and the governments that make it up to recognize and provide for spaces for democratic participation in regional governance, SAPA is consciously

moving towards evolving an alternative regional approach based on the existing model embodied by the ASEAN. Taking this option for the creation of an alternative regional model requires long-term investment on the part of civil society. Collective and cohesive actions are crucial in sending a strong signal to the ASEAN on the seriousness and level of intensity of civil society's effort to engage and open up spaces for the people at the ASEAN. The recent signing of the ASEAN Charter is one opportunity to open up more spaces for peoples' participation which SAPA took advantage of, which would require close monitoring and consistent engagement to ensure that the limited opportunities made available by the Charter are optimized and pried wide open.

It is very notable that SAPA's approach in engaging the ASEAN went beyond the usual parallel efforts of civil society around regional groupings, such as in the case of the SADC and SARC, as well as the Latin American regionalism schemes, which are primarily "shadowing" the official events such as Leaders' Summits. SAPA also "shadows" the key formal meetings of the ASEAN, such as the annual Summit of the Heads of States, but complements it with substantive engagement on key issues such as human rights, labor and migration.

The potentials of this option/approach in evolving into an alternative regional model, however, is limited by the response of the regional institution to civil society pressures, as well as the capacity of civil society to exert pressures on the regional institutions that will bring in changes from within.

Option 2: Alternative Regionalism through Cooperation Between Governmental Actors and Civil Society Outside the ASEAN

This option builds on the existing efforts of civil society organizations in linking community/local work with policy actions at the local, national and regional levels. It is anchored on the networking component of most civil society-led interventions that involve linking communities and organizations sharing common agenda, such as the case of the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Development (AFA)

comprised of national farmers' organizations in east, north and southeast Asia, and also SEAFISH, the regional network of national fishersfolk organizations and support NGOs. Both examples demonstrate the expanse of civil society networking efforts and their potential to influence government policies and programs through mass mobilization and engagement.

A more recent development in the development of civil society-led approaches in alternative regionalism is the involvement of governmental actors in such networking. More and more in recent decades, civil society organizations are working closely with local government units that share the same goals and aspirations in promoting the interest of marginal sectors. In some cases, civil society cooperation with governmental actors also involves close relationship and partnership with relevant national government agencies. These models of civil society-government partnerships present a promising development that could potentially evolve into the development of an alternative model of regionalism that evolves from below and based on strategic cooperation that developed from specific cooperative actions over the years.

This option may take a long time to snowball into a regional model, but the seeds have already been planted especially in countries where civil society has reached a certain level of confidence in cooperating with government institutions and agencies on equal terms based on shared goals, such as in the Philippines and Indonesia. If such experiences evolve into an alternative regional model, it could be considered a bottom-up approach that started from local experiences recognized and mainstreamed at the national level, and later adopted as a model for regional integration. Mainstreaming civil society-government partnership at the national level, however, would depend on the response of the state to such experiences and their willingness to provide spaces for direct participation of civil society in governance. The approach maybe bottom-up in direction, but still be mainly state-led although the definition of what constitutes and who comprises the "state" may evolve in the process.

Option 3: Civil Society-Initiated Alternative Regional Cooperation

This option is a “purely” alternative approach to regionalism that is outside the parameters of the state. This option may involve partnerships among civil society, communities and possibly with progressive local governments at the local and national levels, and forging cooperation among similar initiatives at the regional level. In order for this approach to be truly non-state, the partnership among the societal actors should result to a re-definition of what constitutes and who comprises the “state”, as posed in the earlier option. It would definitely require a more structural transformation of society before a civil society-initiated and led alternative regionalism model is realized.

However, this does not preclude the possibility of such a non-state model to evolve from decades of successful civil society initiatives to be ultimately recognized and mainstreamed at the national level, and for successful regional cooperation be recognized as the norm at the regional level. But, such mainstreaming would still largely depend on the response of the state to the successes of local models initiated by civil society. A parallel mainstreaming of regional cooperation among non-state actors (even including some progressive elements in the government) may also happen that would not require the recognition and endorsement by state actors. For example, AFA and SEAFISH may reach a high level of success in linking farmers and fishers organizations across the region that their contribution in determining the future of agriculture and fisheries in the region cannot be ignored. When such stage of development is reached by those civil society-led regional cooperation models, the ASEAN as the official regional body has no other choice but to accept that there are parallel models of regionalism outside of the state that exist and must be recognized. Thus, a parallel civil society-led regionalism may evolve.

POTENTIAL DRIVERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE REGIONALISM

In conclusion, civil society may consider the above options in promoting and working for the establishment of alternative regionalism models. At the same time, civil society should be closely monitor development at the national, regional and international levels that could serve as drivers for the development of alternative regionalism in order to facilitate the process of evolving new approaches that could bring in substantive changes in a shorter time period. Such drivers should be able to motivate states and non-state actors to act collectively and be willing to subsume their national interests in the name of regional cooperation and integration.

One such driver is Trade, as can be gleaned from the current models of regionalism. However, civil society should work harder in making the state actors understand that Trade interests need not just serve the economic and financial interests of a few, particularly corporate and business players. Civil society should show that Trade may also directly benefit the marginal sectors if only their control over and rights to productive resources such as land, water and appropriate technology are recognized and institutionalized. By clearly linking trade for the interest of the marginal sectors, and the obligation of the states to provide decent livelihood and basic services, civil society can pressure the states to push for that agenda at the regional level as the core principle for regional economic integration.

This may not be an easy task, however, in view of the dominance of the free trade ideology where the biggest will always have the advantage in an unequal playing field, in the current regional integration models. It will not be easy too even among the civil society movement where some anti-trade views have emerged as a result of the frustrations over the neo-liberal agenda in trade. This would definitely require substantive work before any consensus on the potential of trade to directly benefit the marginal sectors can be reached.

Another potential driver for the development of alternative regionalism models is the current global concern on the impacts of climate change on every sector of society. The transboundary and trans-sectoral nature of climate change make it a promising driver for the development of alternative approaches in regional integration. Successful local actions and measures that respond to the impacts of climate change, most of which are initiated and/or involving civil society actors, have the potential to be mainstreamed at the national level and incorporated in the national strategies to tackle climate change. These national strategies and actions that have civil society as key partners can be recognized at the regional level and such experiences and approaches may be considered as the norms for working towards regional integration anchored on the active participation of civil society. However, such possibility remains to be state-led and the eventuality of bringing in non-state actors would depend on how strong civil society applies pressures on the state actors at the regional level.

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