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Conjunctures on “ASEAN Citizenship” 1967-2017: Identities, Ideas, Institutions

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In 2015, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was said to have set in motion a regional community with “peace, prosperity, and people” at the core of its transition towards deeper integration. In 2017, it marked its 50th year - a narrative arc in Southeast Asian history that has arguably defined the region’s contemporary period. What then could be the next for the organization? This paper explores one of those ideas that has been floating around about ASEAN’s future in relation to its people-oriented vision. In particular, it enquires into the abstracted and non-legal notion of “ASEAN citizenship” through identification of conjunctures in the development of the organization. While ASEAN’s lack of a legitimating policy on regional citizenship is understandable given its normative frameworks of intergovernmentalism and non-interference, the paper contends that this notion has already been discursively defined and constructively pursued from within the organization. The resulting narratives on regional identity formation and on ideas and institutions that articulate and generate potential elements of regional citizenship seek to capture aspects of this slippery yet lingering presence of “ASEAN citizenship,” and hopefully contribute to the evolving conversations on the nature and future of ASEAN as it enters a new era.

Keywords: ASEAN, Southeast Asia, Citizenship, Regionalism, Discursive Institutionalism, Constructivism

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“[T]he notion of citizenship requires continual conceptual, philosophical, and value clarification.” (Janowitz 1980, 1)

“Declare the knowledge and the regional identity will take shape.”
(Reynolds 1995, 438)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is currently in flux. The last decade has seen unprecedented shifts in its process of regionalization through its acquisition of a legal entity via the ASEAN Charter (2008), and its commitment to deepen integration among member-states as documented in the Roadmap for ASEAN Community (2009). While meant to be interlocking, the specification of pillars to Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural outlines in broad strokes the essential orientation of the organization towards peace, prosperity, and the people. This holistic community concept appears as ASEAN's attempt to remain relevant in the 21st century, especially in the light of its recent milestones, i.e., inauguration of the ASEAN Community 2015 and the celebration of its 50th year of establishment.

This experimentation at community-building does not seem to be the case half a century ago. The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 was a politically motivated strategy for member-states then to secure their newly-won independence amidst the polarizing ideological complex of the Cold War. As a “residual and artificial category” (Lewis and Wigan 1997, 176), Southeast Asia from this perspective is a mere re-construction of the region's political elite towards that goal. While the elite, by virtue of their positions of state power theoretically represent the people, nowhere in ASEAN's agenda then did they commit to a community-building or integration effort that effectively places the people at the forefront of regional discourses and actions.

One idea that emerged out of the recent and rapid shifts in the region is the deployment of an otherwise non-existing political concept. “ASEAN citizenship” has been a buzzword of late, but none or a very few seem to have taken it seriously from an academic standpoint. This is understandable due to the perceived slipperiness of the concept. Any empirical yardstick in this regard will risk describing a non-material phenomenon. As it stands, the concept is merely used as a generic label to citizens belonging to any of the ASEAN member-states. This paper, however, is interested in locating and engaging the discursiveness and constructiveness of the said category as it pertains to the idea of regional citizenship.

Informed by constructivism and discursive institutionalism however, this

paper argues that notions of ASEAN citizenship may be extrapolated through the organization's policies on regional identity, its leaders' articulation of what may be considered as regional citizens and institutional arrangements that point to some fundamental principles on citizenship. Specifically the paper hopes to: (1) synoptically plot the patterns of what can be considered as "regional citizenship" through the discursive practices of ASEAN; (2) argue that ASEAN citizenship, despite lack of formal recognition from ASEAN itself, is contemporarily deployed in the region through a variety of significations; and (3) contribute to the discussion on ASEAN studies, specifically on the integration of people in Southeast Asia.

Both constructivism and discursive institutionalism are utilized to bring about this narrative. Constructivism interrogates rationality and causality in international relations and veers away from the totalizing focus on formal political actors like states or international organizations. Social constructs matter and the dynamics of global and regional orders, from the words of constructivist Alexander Wendt (1999), may be seen as "ideas all the way down." Identities and human agency are privileged as postulates of the theoretical framework. Analysing ASEAN citizenship conforms to this given its constructiveness at the level of ideas and its positionality on a people-centered regionalism.

Explaining change through discursive institutionalism, on the other hand, stresses the need to capture communicative exercises upon which meaning structures and constructs are made. This becomes relevant when zeroing in on the constructiveness of ASEAN citizenship. This form of institutionalism looks at the deployment of discourses and their materiality over time. Change is the main anchor of discursive institutionalism, says its theorist Vivien Schmidt (2010), rather than continuity which has defined other modes of institutional analysis in political studies. Transformations are thus accounted for in discourses, and institutions here are seen as simultaneously enabling and restricting possibilities of change.

Even if ASEAN citizenship is a recent discourse with floating presence, its signifiers are deployed by ASEAN and perhaps more importantly, by the peoples of Southeast Asia. This indicates change, however limited, in the evolving nature of the region and the regional organization. To be able to capture this construction, the paper is designed to look at ASEAN citizenship from the focal point of the region itself, through conjunctures that follow widely-held conceptions of citizenship.

Citizenship studies have seen a recent turn in political and international studies (Kivisto and Faist 2007, 1). A manifest tendency now is to express citizenship outside the rigid borders of the state. Transnational aspects of globalization have put tremendous strain on the conventional wisdom about citizenship. Despite this, four components of citizenship seem constant across

time and space: (1) membership; (2) rights; (3) duties; and (4) participation (O'Byrne 2005, 5-9). These four will be used as parameters for discursively constructing the idea of ASEAN citizenship from within the regional organization itself. All these however are predicated still to identity as it the larger frame upon which citizenship falls under. While the citizenship-identity nexus may appear as mutually constitutive, the relationship can be best described as commensal with citizenship relying heavily on political opportunities and structures for its sustenance. Absent these institutional support systems, it will least likely thrive given that its core elements, such as fundamental rights and meaningful participation require stringent articulations from and connections to a particular polity (at least in the normative sense). Identity on the other hand flourishes with or without political legitimisation and sponsorship. In ideal terms, it serves as imprimatur to the category of citizenship, lending it its substance and acting as launch pad for political actions.

II. SHARED IDENTITY AS BASIS FOR "ASEAN CITIZENSHIP"

Gerard Delanty (2005, 129) in the context of explicating the elusive quest for a European postnational identity, and to an extent European citizenship, forwards four main characteristics of identity: (1) collective 'we-feelings'; (2) collective consciousness; (3) belonging; and (4) group attachments. These enumerations are significant as they refer directly to a postnational entity and its project of forging an identity beyond the nation-state. Moreover, these points are informative in analysing the battery of associations surrounding ASEAN identity, and consequently, ASEAN citizenship. In nuancing these arguments however, one has to be equally aware of the nested or overlapping dimensions of identity (and citizenship), more so in the case of a non-supranational ASEAN. This simply means that national and regional loyalties should not be seen as either-or, but rather as complementary units of self-identification.

The constructivist view expressed is foundational to the production and reproduction of an ASEAN identity. As identities are always in motion, they can be produced and reproduced at any given time and space. Diversity in this sense is not inimical to Southeast Asian identity but in fact it's very core. What are more significant to look at are the institutional practices towards creating or recreating conditions for evolving such. Concretely, a narrative on what comprises Southeast Asia and its supposed political alter-ego, ASEAN, could help generate such understandings. This is probably one of the more difficult tasks in view of the ongoing attempts at regional integration.

In the course its half a century of existence, ASEAN seems to have responded to these challenges of identity formation in largely ad hoc terms, devoid of a more synoptic and systematic approach. An examination of its very

discourses, however, reveals a historical and continuing symbolic affirmation to this ideal of regional identity. To understand the elusive formation of a regional identity, it is imperative to conceptually delineate ASEAN from Southeast Asia if only to unpack what the preoccupation of the first is over the latter. In this perspective, ASEAN is to be seen as a political project aimed at grouping together countries in the region while Southeast Asia is the broader canvass within which intra- and extra-ASEAN processes take place. This signification could also prove to be useful in this paper as segments of the Southeast Asian community are also deploying their discourses on ASEAN citizenship, even absent the support of ASEAN itself.

ASEAN can be seen in a matrix of attempts to re-conceptualise regional identity from within. Founded by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines in the context of a divisive bipolar global system, ASEAN asserts itself then (and even now) as an independent organisation of nation-states in the perceived geographically-bounded region of Southeast Asia. The discourse on its projection of independence can be extrapolated on several accounts. One is primarily the need to secure national sovereignties following centuries of colonial attachment. Concretely, this means that the organisation is primarily an instrument to fend off intrusions coming from the outside, especially from the great powers such as the United States, the former Soviet Union, and even its closest neighbour China (Acharya 2012, 158). However arguable (as the bloc then appears to side with the anti-communist ideology), it has laid down countervailing mechanisms to assert independence such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, or ZOPFAN (Ibid, 166-167). Presently, ASEAN Centrality is the “institutional discourse” through which the regional organisation assumes the driver’s seat in the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific (but again in a debateable capacity). While all these are matters of political-security, it is still intimately tied with the continuing struggle to rationalise a distinct Southeast Asian identity from within vis-à-vis the region’s heavy colonial baggage in the past and similarly continuing external pressures at present.

Southeast Asian regionalism also serves as catalyst to take the region as a whole, quite independent from the very particularistic nation-based perspectives (Acharya 2012, 3). This by no means entails a cession of nationalities and their sovereign expressions, but rather a processual formation of a regional identification through constant socialisations, better known as the ASEAN Way. This is another counter-point to the oft-derided “talk-shops” in ASEAN, similar to the point pursued by Anthony Milner (2003). For him, talking between and among ASEAN leaders can in fact reduce threats to security. Positively stated and situated in identity discourse, these ridiculed talkfests can facilitate the promotion of a regional perspective and hence, enhance collective consciousness in and about Southeast Asia. This is however not an end by itself but a means for evolving

further regional processes and institutions to the benefit of Southeast Asians.

Beyond the establishment of an organisational shell (*i.e.*, ASEAN) and the institutionalisation of a functional communicative style (*i.e.*, ASEAN Way), what has ASEAN done in so far as facilitating a notion of shared identity is concerned? Its rhetoric of singularity of purpose encapsulated in its motto "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" thus lends itself to closer scrutiny. A platform for this assessment is ASEAN's own history. Even when articulating its discourses of the future through ASEAN 2020 (ASEAN 1997), the Bali Concord II (ASEAN 2003a), the ASEAN Charter (ASEAN 2013a), and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (ASEAN 2009a), ASEAN always charts its direction with retrospective foregrounding. This means that ASEAN appears confident with its own stock-taking of past accomplishments. One is forced to ask—is this notion of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" genuinely supported by significant proportions of discursive constructions and institutional arrangements?

The starting reference for evaluation of the regional organisation is the founding document, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 (ASEAN 1967). The cooperation framework developed here by ASEAN's forefathers presupposes a "region already bound together by ties of history and culture." But as identity is a continuous construction, ASEAN has recognised as well the need to build up on these and assert a Southeast Asian identity. This is reflected in one of its aims and purposes as expressed in the Bangkok Declaration through the insertion of the goal "[t]o promote South-East Asian studies."

For Estrella Solidum (2003, 149-154), ASEAN has not faltered in its task of constructing a framework for cultural cooperation and identity-building in the region: "ASEAN leaders, from the beginning of ASEAN, have hoped to develop an ASEAN collective consciousness and identity among the peoples of Southeast Asia to supplement their national consciousness and identity so that they could all identify with ASEAN as their community." Solidum cites in this regard two ASEAN policies which came before the 1997 ASEAN Community concept: the Cameron Highlands Agreement of 1969 and the Bali Declaration of 1976 (Concord I). Analytically though, there is practically none in the 1969 Cameron Highlands Agreement that pertains directly to identity formation as a centrepiece advocacy at the regional level. This probably reflects the regional landscape then immediately following the establishment of ASEAN. Late 60s to early 70s may be characterised as a period of testing waters among suspicious member-states. While devoid of any discursive value, the Cameron Highlands Agreement sets the tone for cooperation in the field of mass media and specific cultural exchanges in literature and visual and performing arts (ASEAN 1969). In the years prior to the Bali Concord I, this instrument has enabled ASEAN to promote an ASEAN Journal in 1971, establish a National Depository for ASEAN Publications in 1972, organise traditional music and dance festivals and a common archaeological field

work in 1973, and institutionalise ASEAN Film Festivals and ASEAN Literary Awards in the following years (Solidum 2003, 151).

The 1976 Bali Concord I hold much promise in terms of rhetoric compared to the Cameron Highlands Agreement. It is in fact in this Declaration that “ASEAN Community” is first dropped as a regional concept, in contrast with the usual genealogies that start with 1997 (ASEAN Vision 2020) or 2003 (Bali Concord II). It sets the tone for cooperation in the ASEAN (1976) with the following as one of its objectives and principles: “Member states shall vigorously develop an awareness of regional identity and exert all efforts to create a strong ASEAN community, respected by all and respecting all nations on the basis of mutually advantageous relationships, and in accordance with the principles of selfdetermination, sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of nations.” Bali Concord I place this endeavour, along with economic stipulations and provisions for improving ASEAN machinery (*i.e.*, ASEAN Secretariat) within the ambit of “political stability.” This implies institutional priority towards traditional security, rendering all other regional preoccupations in secondary roles. Just the same, Bali Concord I under its Section on Culture and Information reiterates provision of support for the arts and mass media “to enable them to play an active role in fostering a sense of regional identity and fellowship” (similar to the Cameron Highlands Agreement) and the promotion of Southeast Asian studies (similar to one of the goals in the Bangkok Declaration). In the same Section, Bali Concord I adopts too as programmatic action the introduction of study of ASEAN, its member-states then and their language to school curricula. This has received no following until only around 1999 to 2006 when the University of Malaya in Malaysia experimented on a graduate degree about the international relations of the region (ASEAN Foundation 2008, 10-11). Despite lack of clear actions, Bali Concord I should be credited for at least laying down the discourses on the foundations of ASEAN community and the imperative for regional identity formation.

Of particular interest is the institutional design ASEAN has developed for the gargantuan task of regional cultural cooperation. Following the Bali Concord I, a Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) was established in 1978 (ASEAN 2013b). This coincides with the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Cultural Fund (ASEAN 1978). These institutional drivers reflect the regional organisation’s resolve to “promote cooperation in culture to help build an ASEAN identity” (ASEAN 2013b). In time however (specifically in its 1994-1997 action plan), COCI covered more themes under its fold such as environment, AIDS, drugs, and social and economic collaboration (Solidum 2003, 153). This is a precursor to the current form of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) which the former ASEAN Secretary-General Rodolfo Severino (2006, 369) decries as “a smorgasbord of social issues that

more properly belong to national policy and responsibility." From the 1978 COCI to the 2003 ASCC, regional identity as an advocacy for the organisation seems to have taken a rather marginal status.

The discourse from here involves a couple of interesting points. One is that ASEAN sees the cultures of each member-state as the proper platform where an ASEAN identity can thrive. But as Delanty (2005, 129) hints, identity cannot be constructed with the absence of a compelling narrative, and its objectification into symbolic and cognitive forms. It is hard to re-imagine a regional identity without regional perspectives to begin with. The rhetoric and strategy in so far as the above are concerned lie mainly in dealing with the "parts" and not with the "whole." Culture is also problematically understood, with its delimiting stereotype (e.g., showcasing of arts) and its unjustified expansion (e.g., covering in drugs, environment).

Visualisation of the ASEAN Community which extends all the way from the ASEAN Vision 2020 and Bali Concord II to the ASEAN Charter and Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2015 may be seen in this light as a paradigm shift. From its previous cooperative framework, ASEAN seems to assert itself after a disastrous lack of regional response in the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. The institutional leap may be in part, an attempt to regain its legitimacy and redraw its significance in the international order. On a more positive note, it can also be that ASEAN has gained enough traction and the confidence-level among its member-states are considerably good enough for them to transition from cooperation to integration. A compelling case to this is the realisation itself of another discourse on identity that goes with the moniker "One Southeast Asia." This is an important conjuncture to ASEAN history when it allowed for the entry of new member-states, starting with Brunei Darussalam in 1984 to the enlargement in the late 90s with the entry of Vietnam in 1995, Myanmar and Laos in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. "One Southeast Asia" is rhetoric itself that ASEAN is closer to the approximation of the entire region that is the Southeast Asia. Concretely, aside from the more symbolic acceptance of new entrants in the 90s, collectively called as the CLMV, these member-states have also been prioritised in one of the flagship programmes of ASEAN, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), to ensure that development gap is narrowed and no member-state is left behind in the integration process. All these fixations form the "regional idea," the principal source of unity in the region (Ba 2009, 102).

2003 serves as a good marker for the ongoing shift of the regional organisation. Not only is it the period when Bali Concord II made concrete the declarations made in the 1997 ASEAN Vision 2020, it is also the same year when the ASEAN Ministers of Culture and Arts (AMCA) held their inaugural meeting in Kuala Lumpur (ASEAN 2013b). There are two important highlights to this

report related to the present narrative: (1) the shift of the use of identity for the purpose of “regional development,” and (2) its view of complementarity of diversity and unity. Whereas in Bali Concord I cultural cooperation and enhancement of a regional identity are tied with political stability, this meeting of AMCA prioritised more its economic advantages. Its report is loaded with phrases like “small and medium culture enterprises and industry,” “cultural entrepreneurs... transition to a market based economy,” and “liberalizing the trading of ASEAN cultural products.” This view on the utility of culture and identity is reflective of the new developments in ASEAN regionalism which primarily focused on economic integration.

Its view on the complementarity of diversity and unity in the region is a derivative of the declaration in Bali Concord II. To wit, the latter’s Section C.5, under ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (2003a) states: “The Community shall nurture talent and promote interaction among ASEAN scholars, writers, artists and media practitioners to help preserve and promote ASEAN’s diverse cultural heritage while fostering regional identity as well as cultivating people’s awareness of ASEAN” (emphasis added). This addresses a central assertion earlier posed—ASEAN, to evolve a regional identity, must not dwell alone on the diversity of its cultures but rather develop one that seeks synergy from the region at large.

The 2008 ASEAN Charter makes a case for this evolving regional narrative and symbolic and cognitive unities. Aside from explicitly identifying “peoples of ASEAN” as its immediate clientele, and setting up of a new intra-regional institution through the ASEAN Human Rights Body (now the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights), an important chapter of the ASEAN Charter (2013a, 29-30) is Chapter XI: Identity and Symbols. Article 35 on ASEAN identity reads: “ASEAN shall promote its common ASEAN identity and a sense of belonging among its peoples in order to achieve its shared destiny, goals and values.” This points to the utility of a regional identity in facilitating solidarity and ensuring the “we-feeling” in the envisioned community. Alongside this, Articles 36-40 direct the usage of ASEAN symbols from the motto, flag and emblem to the observation of an ASEAN Day and the composition of an ASEAN anthem.

What’s more interesting in the discourses about the Charter is the call-to-action in the closing statement of ASEAN Chair Thailand in the 14th ASEAN Summit with the theme “ASEAN Charter for ASEAN Peoples” (2009b). Aside from the fact that the regional organisation itself is elucidating the connection between symbolic and cognitive forms of the region to the heightened awareness about ASEAN identity, the statement drops a new political concept in support of the above propositions: “We also highlighted the need to develop the idea and sense of ASEAN citizen, who has greater awareness of ASEAN and of its values

and principles” (emphasis added). From this view, ASEAN citizenship somehow stands as a referent to the valorised goal of constructing an ASEAN identity.

The Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 further expands the coverage of identity-building in the region through its Blueprint for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Its Characteristics and Elements are in Section E: Building ASEAN Identity with sub-sections on (1) Promotion of ASEAN Awareness and a Sense of Community; (2) Preservation and Promotion of ASEAN Cultural Heritage; (3) Promotion of Cultural Creativity and Industry; and (4) Engagement with the Community (ASEAN 2009a, 87-90). Clustering the 22-point action under the Promotion of ASEAN Awareness and Sense of Community sub-section, three main discourse units can be layered. First, there is recognition of the need to reach out to various institutions and sectors in order to affect the desired goal of shared identity, especially to the young people. Second, it brings to fore diverse locations of interaction where such a shared identity can germinate, for example in sports, inter-faith dialogues, and academic exchanges. Third, credence is given to communication as it serves as an instrument where people can be aware of and identify with ASEAN.

The discourse on shared identity, seen from the above narratives, has evolved through time. Its typified discursive strategy on diversity and its institutional practice on generating a sense of regional membership through self-identification warrant a rethinking as the organisation seeks to move forward with integration. With the view that citizenship rests on identity, it is important to note that, however convoluted the past attempts had been, recent milestones represent discursive upgrades towards the “ASEAN peoples”— the regional organisation’s favored term for its citizens.

III. IDEAS ON “ASEAN CITIZENSHIP” FROM THE REGIONAL ELITE

While declarations and roadmaps are entry points to ASEAN’s notion of identity-building and fostering of a people-centred regional community, individual expressions of ASEAN leaders are also worthy of examination on their notions of ASEAN citizenship. Their discourses function as political capital, which holds an inert capacity to deepen regional identity and integration if translated properly as policies or institutional actions. Interestingly, these regional elite appear to have been emboldened by the recent turn to ASEAN Community. Some of them have even deployed the notion of ASEAN citizenship in their respective assertions.

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, in the context of discursively imagining a regional order following Bali Concord II offers challenging ideas and transformative proposals. In the National Colloquium on

ASEAN co-hosted by Malaysia's Foreign Ministry and the Universiti Teknologi MARA in 2004, Badawi in his keynote address forces a collective reflection on the essential system governing the ASEAN. From a policy-based regime which has kept the organisation afloat since its establishment, the former premier seems to favour in the present generation a gradual transitioning to a rules-based regime (Badawi 2004, 9-10). This is crucial; especially in the discourse of human rights that substantiates any form of citizenship.

A rules-based order presupposes for him an "ASEAN Community Structure," Comprising this are the conceptual building blocks which he elaborates as (Ibid. 11-13): 1) principle of community interests over national interests; 2) capacity for enforcing community decision; and 3) adherence to a common set of community values.

ASEAN community is expected to create an environment which enables the individuality of the member-states to flourish while they share, at the same time, certain common principles, practices and values.

It is also important to take ASEAN back to where it really belongs, that is with the peoples of ASEAN. We must erase the perception that ASEAN is all about meetings between political leaders or government officials or that it is of particular interest only to the business community. ASEAN must never become elitist. It must be people-centred. This means that there must be adequate provisions for greater participation by the civil society in the ASEAN processes.

In order to keep ASEAN with the people, the ASEAN community would need to present itself in images and symbols that are identifiably ASEAN in character. Some possibilities come to mind, such as an ASEAN common time zone, an ASEAN common travel document or, more ambitiously, an ASEAN common currency. All these would make it clear to the people that the ASEAN community is actually about them.

The sophistication of Badawi's proposal is unattainable, but it opens up a clearer discourse on a people-centered regionalism. His ideas about a meaningful ASEAN community where ASEAN peoples are at the center imply a degree of readiness among some in the regional elite. It is of no wonder that during the term of Surin Pitsuwan as Secretary-General, attempts to re-structure ASEAN's approach came in the form of constructive engagement. The discourse it carries simultaneously alters and complements the more traditional package of norms inscribed in the ASEAN Way. Constructive engagement pertains to modulated interaction as opposed to absolute non-intervention in member-states, a conduct which has been used by ASEAN over recent skirmishes (ASEAN 2010). Pitsuwan seeks to re-capture the essentials of the concept by using it also as a

form of bridge linking ASEAN and its stakeholders. Stressing that ASEAN Charter serves as a “social contract,” he affirms that “[i]n order to build the ASEAN Community, the people of ASEAN must develop a sense of ownership, participation, and the awareness that we... own this process and shape this Community in our own image” (Ibid, 11). The former Secretary General believes that it is the responsibility of ASEAN peoples to build the Community. For him, “[e]very ASEAN citizen is responsible for spreading the message of ASEAN” (emphasis added). His perceived functionality of the notion of citizenship is interesting in this juncture, despite his earlier notation that “ASEAN is not yet ready to recognise ASEAN Citizenship similar to EU Citizenship” (Pitsuwan 2007).

Pitsuwan belongs to the succession of recent ASEAN Secretaries-General who are proponents of strengthening regional identity and championing people-centered regionalism. Before Pitsuwan (2008-2012), Ong Keng Yong (2003-2007) and Rodolfo Severino Jr. (1998-2002) were at the helm of the organisation. Le Luong Minh (2013-2017), for his part, oversaw the more recent institutional leaps of ASEAN with the inauguration of ASEAN Community in 2015 and the celebration of ASEAN’s 50th year of establishment in 2017.

Of these regional leaders, Ong stands out in providing a full articulation of what ASEAN citizenship should be. In an address entitled ASEAN Cultural Connection: ASEAN Values and its Relevance to the Modern World (2003), he specifically makes references to the behavioural attributes of his idealised “ASEAN citizen.” Such for him links together the “vast kaleidoscope of diverse cultures in the region” and the “outlook [of ASEAN citizens] towards themselves and the world.” Ong states the normative fact that ASEAN citizens are always bound by the backgrounds of their home countries, from ethnicity and socio-economic position to religion and professional experiences. These values notwithstanding, certain behavioural inclinations according to him are shared by ASEAN societies by virtue of similar geography, climate, and historical experiences. His idealisation of what an ASEAN citizen is, and how this figures in as a policy statement to the regional organisation is worthy of quotation (2003):

Generally speaking, an ASEAN citizen is family-oriented, tradition-minded, respectful of authority, consensus-seeking and tolerant. Basically, we have a culture of caring and sharing. Helping each other, sharing responsibilities, sharing benefits. These common qualities in attitudes and predispositions are clearly reflected in the Bali Concord II (Declaration of ASEAN Concord II) adopted by ASEAN Leaders at their Summit in Bali, in October 2003. This important document has stressed shared responsibility, shared prosperity and shared identity.

Setting aside the lack of empirical validation, and what appears as essentialist and functionalist descriptions, this constructivism of Ong can be taken in as a strategic first-step towards substantiating the construct ASEAN citizenship. It is important to note that he does not stop with sentimentalism, but rather engages the political category in relation to the landmark Community concept. To him Bali Concord II is a representation of the very values that define ASEAN citizens. This discourse demonstrates that there is no inherent gap between matters cultural and political, no chasm between identity and policy. For him, the values attributed to ASEAN citizens, summarily the preference for tolerance, harmony and consensus, form the bedrock of ASEAN's internal cohesion and external projection (2003).

Despite the limitations of the regional organisation itself, and the contested nature of their rhetoric about ASEAN identity and citizenship, these ASEAN Secretaries-General provide elements of, what Delanty calls as, "reflexive articulation integration" (2005, 141). This means that ASEAN is attempting to get out of its "business-as-usual" mood over the past decades with the clear intent of re-imagining the regional order, generating in the process conceptual instruments such as community, identity, constructive engagement, and even citizenship.

Probably the ASEAN leader with the strongest view about ASEAN citizenship is George Yeo, former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Singapore. He is animated by the supposed coming of age of ASEAN especially with its Charter and Community as frameworks for regionalism. Wrapping up his term as Chairman of the 41st ASEAN Standing Committee at the Closing Ceremony of the 41st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, he adds another 'C' to the regional preoccupation aside from the Charter and Community-building—the common Challenges confronting members of the the region. Interestingly though, he zeroes on a much more specific 'C', which is ASEAN citizenship. Quoting Yeo (2008):

For ASEAN to succeed and endure, the peoples of Southeast Asia must increasingly internalise a sense of common ASEAN citizenship. This will naturally take time. We know we are succeeding as members of each younger generation feel more for ASEAN than their parents. ASEAN has to be built both top down and from the bottom up. Only then will we truly be an ASEAN Community. (emphasis added)

His speech anticipates a direction of regional political identity that has not found its way until quite recently. Yeo calls for an internalisation of a form of political being, a regional citizen, who shall constitute the other part of the binary in his equation of ASEAN Community (*i.e.*, the regional organisation forming the

"top" and ASEAN citizens forming the "bottom"). Yeo confirms this discursive connection in another speech at the ASEAN Business Club in Bangkok: "Looking ahead, there are two possible choices for ASEAN: either we become more integrated and our citizens feel a greater sense of ASEAN citizenship in addition to national citizenship, or we disintegrate" (Yeo 2012). From the foregoing it is clear for him that Community and citizenship are inseparable political ideals for ASEAN.

In both speeches of Yeo, he does not only place at centrepiece the notion of ASEAN citizenship, he projects as well ideas on how regional processes and institutions can move forward the ASEAN Community. Playing again with the letter 'C', he mentions three Cs that could deal with the common challenges of the region—credibility, competitiveness, and centrality (2008). Credibility, he says, refers to commitment for action. Competitiveness, on the other hand, is achievable only when ASEAN works as a group in the global economy. Centrality, the much-touted ASEAN principle, is the instrument it utilises in making functional other regional security architectures. Following Yeo's articulation, a credible ASEAN that is institutionally emboldened to execute its plans, a competitive ASEAN whose regional market is standing equally with other main global economies, and a stabilising ASEAN centrality which ensures peace in the region are what would make the organisation attuned to the demands of the future. The vision of harmonising ASEAN citizenship with this reconfigured ASEAN Community will require a wide-ranging transformation on the part of the regional organisation and the member-states comprising it. At the moment, what seems workable are enabling conditions that can be tied to such an ideal. But are these provided for in the existing regional processes and institutions?

IV. INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS FOR AN "ASEAN CITIZENSHIP"

Narratives of development, however limited, can be exacted out of the menu of functions ASEAN has accomplished and is presently undertaking. The rhetoric of ASEAN Community and its attendant actualizations such as the enforcement of Charter and the articulation of blueprints for its political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars are pivotal to Southeast Asian regionalism. Discourse-wise, these are indicative of a new order that is beginning to take shape. But these alone cannot gauge ASEAN's relevance. For one, the supposedly new instruments at its disposal like the Charter or the Declaration of Human Rights are mired with criticisms as to their actual capacity to effect change. There is also the lingering question concerning ASEAN's mode of interaction and definitive strategy in shaping regional and even global order. Jürgen Rüländ (2011, 84) characterises the behaviour of ASEAN as "hedging

utility,” which pertains to its national sovereignty bias that limits its prospects for effective multilateralism.

Meaning is another problem, aside from utility. Substituting a widely shared point about Europe from Julia Kristeva (Delanty 2005, 127), ASEAN must become not just useful, but also meaningful to its people. To break free from the perception that it is only a clique of the regional elite, ASEAN has sought to be more inclusive in the course of time, culminating to the avowed ASEAN Community. Its resonance with the people has yet to be fully realised, though. The conflicting overlaps of a structurally-limited ASEAN on one hand and its recent conjunctures on pressing a people-centred community-building process on the other constitute a backdrop with which to analyse what can be considered as potentially enabling institutional mechanisms for an ASEAN citizenship.

The selected processes that follow, namely (1) people-to-people connectivity; (2) formation of “we-feelings” through education; and (3) promotion and protection of human rights, are constructed along the seemingly universal and normative components of citizenship (O’Byrne 2003, 7-9): (1) Membership pertains to the politics of inclusion and exclusion; (2) Rights are the entitlements enjoyed by those included in a group, a central component of citizens’ belongingness to a particular polity; (3) Duties, often seen as the latter’s conceptual other, is an act of affirmation to the polity or the community; and (4) Participation refers to the form and degree of voluntary involvement to the affairs of the society.

The ASEAN institutions to be analysed capture one way or another above formulations. People-to-people connectivity, as articulated and actualised through the much-flaunted ASEAN Connectivity project, seeks to foster a sense of membership to peoples of Southeast Asia through increased intra-ASEAN interaction. It may also be seen as both a simple duty and a form of participation to stake claims in the ongoing regional integration process. The nurturing of a regional consciousness through education not only promotes an ASEAN identity or an ideational membership to the region, but also allows for opportunities of networking among individuals and institutions across member countries. The human rights mechanism on the other hand, while still on its infancy stage, deserves a sizeable space in any narrative about a people-centred ASEAN or any discourse on citizenship. It signifies a sense of “we-feelings,” a kind of membership to a community that promotes solidarity among Southeast Asians regardless of national citizenships. Transnational civil society groups of the region, for instance, have taken the cudgel of engaging ASEAN processes, thereby promoting active participation and a semblance of regional duty to peoples and groups in the Southeast Asia. The constructiveness of an evolving ASEAN citizenship (small case ‘c’) according to these streams, whether or not it will spin off to a genuinely legal ASEAN Citizenship (big case ‘C’), will rest on

this congruence of membership, rights, duties, and participation. The emergent discourses from these conjunctures of connectivity, consciousness-formation, and human rights in the context of ASEAN integration ultimately provide some material basis and even symbolic capital to an embryonic regional citizenship.

A functional definition for ASEAN citizenship is necessary at this point if only to stress further its discursive presence. Chandra Muzaffar (2004, 101), in his essay *The Empowerment of the ASEAN citizen*, alludes to it as a “normative concept which should be allowed to grow and develop in the present and in the future.” Acquisition of regional consciousness and empowerment of that citizen are its foundations according to him. This duality corroborates as well the chosen frames in this section for explaining “regional citizenship” in ASEAN. As previously stated however, the concept itself lacks a legal and formal element. Nowhere in official accords or even existing instrumentalities of the organisation, pre- and even post-ASEAN Community (ASEAN 2014-2017), can one find a direct expression of this political category apart from referring to citizens of member-states as a “ASEAN citizen.” But such mere membership, or national citizenship, is at best a step towards some direction. Ultimately, if ASEAN citizenship could find its actualisation in the future, it would have to be nested with existing national communities. There is no foreseeable escape yet from the grip of the nation-state, though an evolution of it that can accommodate multiple belongingness does seem theoretically and practically worth aspiring for (Noor 2013). ASEAN’s rigid intergovernmentalism will necessarily have to evolve in this process to harmonise national and regional citizenships.

Citing once more Muzaffar (2004, 101), the legality of regional citizenship will not materialise unless ASEAN styles itself like the European Union with a distinct legal personality which would carry with it “rights and responsibilities which are part and parcel of any form of citizenship.” ASEAN’s acquisition of a legal personality is however different from that of EU. The historic entry into force by the Maastricht Treaty that created EU in 1993 for example projects in its first article a “new stage in the process of creating an even closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen” (EC 2013). Its entire Part Two (Citizenship of the Union), specifically Articles 8 to 8d, provides constructions of European regional citizenship especially with respect to accrued rights.

In the case of the ASEAN Charter (2013a) however, the legal persona has not produced the same effect. There is not a single reference to the word “citizen” to the important document. The drafters of the Charter, former ASEAN Secretary-General Pitsuwan said, felt at that time that “ASEAN was not yet ready to recognize the ASEAN ‘citizenship’” (2007). Entered into force in 2008, the document instead abstractly uses the word “people” to refer not only to its clientele (*i.e.*, the Southeast Asians) but to the regional organisation itself (*i.e.*,

ASEAN). Blurring this distinction has discursive implications into the nature of ASEAN itself. For instance, the preamble of the Charter, which opens with “We, the peoples of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations...” (ASEAN 2013a, 1), implies an assumed source of legitimisation. This is notwithstanding the fact that the ratification of the ASEAN Charter has been never subjected to a popular referendum, nor has it been consulted to the various stakeholders at the very least. Its approach to consultation reflects the usual view about ASEAN’s elitism: the handpicked Eminent Persons Group (EPG) comprised of each member-states’ well-known statesmen, was the only one tasked to forward recommendations for the draft of the Charter then. This differs discursively from the Maastricht Treaty in that the latter clearly states that the treaty is principally an agreement among heads of EU member-states. Ironically however, the ASEAN Charter, while peppered with the category “people,” lacks the depth of EU’s Maastricht Treaty in terms of empowering its people. Although ASEAN is *sui generis* as it has a different regional integration design compared to EU, an analysis of its rhetoric of “people-centred” integration as stressed in its Charter still reveals certain ambiguities.

Of the 12 mentions of “peoples” in the ASEAN Charter (excluding the use of “people” in the official name of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic), certain representations about its nature are evident. First, as stated above, the Charter purports that the people are at the centre of the ASEAN process. Second, it creates a meta-distinction between “peoples and Member States.” While the people are considered part of a member-state, nuancing governmentality may be necessary for the organisation to press the idea that it is being more inclusive in its desire to integrate the people to the regional community. Third, it speaks of the benefits intended for the people like high quality of life, empowerment and enhanced well-being, and livelihood. Fourth and last representation is the reference to the diverse composition of the peoples of ASEAN, which, according to the set of ASEAN principles, must be respected at all times. In summary, these four representations as found in the Charter show the layers of referentiality of ASEAN peoples: ASEAN peoples as they relate (1) to ASEAN processes (specifically, on community-building); (2) to their governing states (to which they can also be distinguished from); (3) to the perceived benefits to be received in the course of integration; and (4) to their social and cultural locations (i.e., their diverse composition).

From this viewpoint, the materially non-existent ASEAN citizenship finds its closest semantic parallel with the Charter references on the “peoples of ASEAN.” Similar conjunctures covering particular dimensions of citizenship point as well to the direction of consolidating membership, rights, duty, and participation of these ASEAN peoples. People-to-people connectivity, fostering of “we-feeling” through education, and protection and promotion of human

rights, without being conceived by ASEAN as elements of a regional citizenship, are discursive formations and institutional arrangements by themselves, constructing ideas that reposition the “peoples of ASEAN” at the center of the integration process.

ASEAN Connectivity is among the “4Cs Strategy” that the regional organisation has been striving to improve on recently. Along with the other ‘Cs,’ which include the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Community, and ASEAN Centrality, these form the basis of the regional integration at present. Lim Chze Cheen (2012) of the ASEAN Secretariat Connectivity Division believes that connectivity is a natural progression in the almost 50 years of the organisation’s history. Lim specifically locates connectivity as within these latest conjunctures of the ASEAN, especially with the adoption of a Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity in 2010. This has been expanded in 2016 to cover new strategic areas such as digital technologies and regulatory practices (ASEAN 2016, 9-10).

The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity is composed of three different, yet interlocking types of linkages (ASEAN 2011): (1) physical connectivity; (2) institutional connectivity; and (3) people-to-people connectivity. Specific to the latter, the aim is to empower the people and link them together in areas of education, culture, and tourism. Taking consideration of its discourse and the plan that it seeks to accomplish from 2011 to 2015, ASEAN Connectivity can be seen as the main driver of regional integration. Not only does it link the three pillars of ASEAN Community, it also conjoins places, policies, and peoples of Southeast Asia. The regional organisation is cognisant of this, even granting it a distinct unit at the ASEAN Secretariat (in between the Secretary General and the Community Departments). In 2014, a decision was made to recalibrate its Master Plan to 2025 (ASEAN 2016).

One of its key objectives is people-to-people connectivity which aims “to develop initiatives that promote and invest in education and life-long learning, support human resources development, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, promote ASEAN cultural exchanges, and promote tourism and the development of related industries” (ASEAN 2011). In order to accomplish this, a menu of modalities is provided which ties up with functions performed by the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, the AUN, and the ASEAN COCI. In as much as the entire idea of ASEAN Connectivity being a game-changer is concerned, the institutional limitations that have characterised ASEAN over the years seem to haunt again with the Master Plan’s rhetoric and strategy. It appears as a hodgepodge of totally unrelated ideals, which quite strangely mimics the ASCC Blueprint in terms of some areas of work (ASEAN 2009a). Its task for regional identity formation, for instance, is lumped with specifics on ICT optimisation.

Aside from providing opportunities for more people-to-people contact, integration should also mean integration of consciousness—a “we-feeling” or

ideational contact among members of the regional community. No less than the ASEAN Charter, the Roadmap to ASEAN Community, and the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan recognise this. Two extra-ASEAN institutions have been specifically mandated to facilitate such desired cognitive transformation, the ASEAN Foundation, and the ASEAN University Network or AUN.

ASEAN Foundation is one of the only two ASEAN entities outside the regional organisation's formal and conventional structure mentioned in the ASEAN Charter (the other one is the Article on ASEAN Human Rights Body, which later on materialised into ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights). The first Section on Article 15 of ASEAN Charter (2013a, 19) on ASEAN Foundation reads: "The ASEAN Foundation shall support the Secretary-General of ASEAN and collaborate with the relevant ASEAN bodies to support ASEAN community building by promoting greater awareness of the ASEAN identity, people-to-people interaction, and close collaboration among the business sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders in ASEAN." ASEAN Foundation on this note serves as the liaising institution between ASEAN and the public sphere of the region which includes business, academic, civil society sectors, and related stakeholders.

In the context of articulating ASEAN Vision 2020, ASEAN leaders established in 1997 the ASEAN Foundation to serve as the platform for promoting greater awareness of ASEAN and to contribute to the formulation a development cooperation strategy (ASEAN Foundation 2013). A look at the ASEAN Foundation Comprehensive Report (2012, 5) reveals that, based on its line-item budget, theme-based projects of the Foundation related to Promoting ASEAN Awareness and Identity is only at 18%, in contrast to the 66% on Developing Human Resources and Building Capacity. The report broadly mentions a couple of "cultural projects" it has undertaken over the past 15 years and takes pride with a survey it commissioned in 2007 where the cumulative score of the surveyed population who agrees that they are "citizens of ASEAN" is an overwhelming number of close to 77 per cent. From 2014-2017 however, ASEAN Foundation Annual Reports point to projects, like youth programs and multi-channel dialogues, that are more consistent with its function on increasing ASEAN awareness. This institutional shift is within the context of the recent historical milestones of the organisation.

Earlier than ASEAN Foundation, but with the same initiative at fostering the "we-feeling" in the region is the ASEAN University Network (AUN). Founded in 1995, AUN is initially envisioned during the 4th ASEAN Summit in 1992 to "hasten solidarity and development of regional identity through promotion of human resource development" (AUN 2008, 11). By developing human resources, AUN commits itself to initiatives on higher education and linkages between and among scholars of the region. This is fairly consistent with

the adoption of an AUN Charter four years after the visioning exercise of the 1992 ASEAN Summit. By 1996 however, AUN's general objective slips away from the earlier point on regional identity, at least in rhetoric, and proceeds with the aim "to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN by promoting collaborative study and research programmes on the priority areas identified by ASEAN" (Ibid, 97). Initiatives of AUN since its foundation however point not to a directionless trajectory of mechanically coordinating regional scholars, but a constant cultivation of mechanisms to nurture regional identity. Among which is the project on putting up ASEAN Studies programme which now runs in Malaysia and is recently piloted in Thailand. An ASEAN University was also conceived "against a backdrop of the necessary role of education in building the ASEAN Community and fostering a deeper sense of ASEANness" (Ibid, 49), but this was eventually shelved. Since 2013, AUN has also been rapidly developing its principle and method of quality assurance to universities with the goal of harmonising regional standards on higher education. Constant socialisations among academics in the region through this project and other professional exchanges assist in generating a sense of region to faculty and students alike.

AUN is not without challenges in coming to terms with its mission. It recognises for instance the lack of a more comprehensive membership from ASEAN universities. Transposing Ba's notion of "regional idea" (2009, 102) to this context, initiatives by the network may be seen as limited to only its member-universities and associates. Further expansion does seem an antidote, but its financial support tied to Thailand and external donors restrict such possibilities. From its list of programmes, especially on the matter of scholarship and student exchanges, one can practically see the disparity as a result of this imbalance in the source of funds. A number of projects intended for student mobility is supported by the ASEAN+3 UNet (University Network), which by implication exposes the recipients more to the East Asian partners than with the region itself. This is not to say that AUN member-universities do not provide scholarships and exchange programmes; it is just that the East Asian counterparts seem more aggressive and are therefore overpowering intra-ASEAN initiatives (the same holds true for ASEAN Foundation with most donors coming from East Asia). Amidst these, AUN is a promising site of intervention for developing a regional "we-feeling," especially among the young who will constitute the next generation of ASEAN citizens. From the foregoing though, institutional weakness remains a challenging variable in this direction of creating a sense of membership to the regional community.

The most important conjuncture for an evolving ASEAN citizenship, articulated from the ends of the regional organisation, is the institution of human rights mechanisms in the discourses and action programmes of ASEAN. No less

than the ASEAN Charter emphasises this through invoking the vocabulary of “promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms” as stated in its Preamble (2013a, 2) and Article 14 (Ibid, 19). The Charter mandates the creation of a human rights body, which materialised into the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009. As human rights are at the core of any citizenship framework, ASEAN’s commitment to its promotion and protection is a welcome development in integrating peoples of the region and evolving a foundation for regional citizenship.

The road to such a commitment was paved with resistance from the political elites of the region. As early as 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights calls upon the creation of regional human rights mechanisms that attend to “regional particularities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds” (SAPA-TFAHR 2010, 1-2). Though an ASEAN joint communiqué is released after this, the next conjuncture for a comprehensive human rights discourse will take place only a decade after, in the context of the discussions on ASEAN Charter. Even in the process of drafting the Charter, human rights advocates had to contend with its simple mention, a fact that reflects the “paucity of human rights policy in ASEAN’s 40 years history,” and the “sanctity of national sovereignty” which runs counter to a human rights principle that places the individual over the state (Collinge 2007, 64). A rules-based decision-making process in the ASEAN Charter would have been more consistent with the organisation’s quite recent turn on human rights, but the proposal from the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was left unheeded. Despite reported disagreements on how to go about institutionalising human rights in the region, the EPG (2006, 15) forwarded as part of its Report the need to guarantee human security “to every ASEAN citizens,” with the view of improving ASEAN from its status as a Community to a Union.

All these should not negate landmark advances, albeit piecemeal, in the ASEAN policy on human rights. There is, as early as 1988 the Declaration on the Advancement of Women. In 2007, the Declaration for the Protection of Migrant Workers’ Rights is adopted. The Roadmap for ASEAN Community (2009, 8) likewise bares an action plan for human rights following the Charter’s provisions. Two observations arise from these historical tracing: First is that ASEAN seems to constrict its view of human rights only to the vulnerable peoples of the region. Second, while the critique to ASEAN’s human rights policy is true, it cannot be denied that spaces have opened up for the peoples of ASEAN from a rights perspective since the entry of the ASEAN Charter and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community into force.

AICHR is the newly minted institution designated for this function. This nomenclature of the new ASEAN organ lends itself into a discursive framing. Intergovernmental stresses the fact that AICHR does not exist above the

member-states, but are generally working under them through a regional platform. This is consistent with the title granted to AICHR Representatives. Though the institution is a “commission” by name, ASEAN has chosen to call AICHR members as Representatives. This emphasises the point that those at the helm of the regional human rights body are, first and foremost, representatives of their respective countries (ASEAN 2012a, 16). This means that these representatives are driven still by their national commitments. Article 3 of its Terms of Reference clearly points out that AICHR is a consultative body (ASEAN 2012b, 6) with consultation and consensus as its only decision-making mechanisms (Ibid, 10). Essentially, it prevents intervention, consistent with the institutional norms that have defined ASEAN through the years—but largely inconsistent with existing human rights mechanisms worldwide.

Contrastingly, ASEAN Charter’s use of “peoples of ASEAN” as its main vocabulary is reversed in the ASEAN Declaration of Human Rights (ADHR) (AICHR 2012). The landmark declaration opens with an air of authority, introducing the framers as “Heads of State/Government of the Member States.” The ASEAN Charter, on the other hand, introduces the “peoples of the Member States” as its source of legitimacy and power. The rest of the document, however, necessitates a rather intricate assessment. For one, it follows a Marshallian notion of citizenship that embraces the multiplicity of rights, from civic and political to economic, social and cultural. Interestingly, the Declaration adds two more non-categorised or “stand-alone” rights: Right to Development and Right to Peace. Right to Development refers to access of benefits arising from economic, social, cultural and political development. The Declaration captures well in this provision the multi-dimensional nature of development which includes principles like environmentalism, fair trade, internationalism, sustainability, inter-generational entitlement, and equitability. Right to Peace, on the other hand, pertains to the individual’s enjoyment of peace as derived from political and security frameworks of ASEAN. The provision also tasks ASEAN member-states to deepen friendship and cooperation to achieve a peaceful, harmonious and stable region. While these novel approaches to human rights discourse are welcome, the Declaration of Human Rights as a whole is not without deep reservations. One stringent critique to this comes from the civil society that sees the document as lowering the minimum set by universal conceptualizations on human rights.

These contrasting discourses seem to point out that the supposed hardened norms of ASEAN have relative flexibility and thus some norm change may in fact be possible. Participation from the stakeholders in the region may push further evolutions. The case of Solidarity for Asian People’s Advocacy – Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights (SAPA-TFAHR 2010, 2011) in effecting a progressive and proactive engagement with these human rights mechanisms of ASEAN is a significant model of being critical and collaborative at the same

time. AICHR (2017, 4) reports as well that as of June 2017, the commission has already granted 16 civil society organisations with “consultative relationship” status.

Tapping on the gains of developing an ASEAN policy on human rights and working to evolve it further as an instrument of empowerment to the ASEAN peoples is an opportunity in the present process of community-building. Empowerment and consciousness, Muzzafar (2004, 101) believes, “would pave the way for ASEAN citizenship.” The regional discourse and institutions on human rights, despite their relative effectiveness, are still relevant conjunctures in re-imagining Southeast Asians as ASEAN citizens. In a similar vein, the human rights mechanisms need some serious re-imagining, too. A discourse- and institution-change on human rights may very well spell a new era of ASEAN regionalism.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper begins with the question on what could be the next for ASEAN. For the past 50 years, the regional organization sought to provide avenues for the discussing and addressing issues of common interest in Southeast Asia. With its historic movement from mere cooperation to integration, there seems much expectation on what ASEAN as a normative actor in the international relations of the region should do.

From within the regional organization itself, one sees a new imaginary—that of ASEAN citizenship. This paper has attempted to show that the scaffolding for this conceptual architecture has already been constructively articulated from the very beginning of the organization in the late 60s to the discussions over ASEAN Community and ASEAN Charter in the late 90s and the first decade of the 21st century. Identity is significantly and consistently referred to as one of the preoccupations of ASEAN, which is crucial in framing any discourse on citizenship. The diverse Southeast Asian identities are to be its core, but regional perspectives have yet to take full shape. A sampling of regional leaders demonstrates as well the complex idea of regional citizenship as complementary to community-building efforts. Their articulations differ from one another, with some cautiously acknowledging its discursive presence and others advocating the idea as the next important pivot in ASEAN regionalism. Finally, certain institutional settings of the recent turn towards deeper integration point to a rhetoric of and creation of processes for “ASEAN peoples,” which appears at the moment as the organization’s preferred nomenclature for its citizens. Three policies that conform to the citizenship-identity nexus, namely people-to-people connectivity, formation of “we-feelings” through education, and promotion and protection of human rights, reveal that despite ASEAN’s non-recognition of the concept of ASEAN citizens, the discourses informing the three approximate elements that may mount up to

regional citizenship. These of course were not without theoretical and practical difficulties. Much of the ideas were either conservatively developed or totally conflated with several regional concerns. Even good ideas without the necessary institutional improvements hamper the prospects of these initiatives.

Further evolution however of the varied notions of regional citizenship in the form of ASEAN peoples demonstrate both the historicity of discourses, with utterances evoked in the contexts of discussions on ASEAN Community, and the capacity of discourses to initiate change, with recent processes geared towards effecting a regionalism of ASEAN peoples. The idea itself simultaneously builds up and breaks apart from the past.

"Explaining a phenomenon whose existence has not been proved... is not uncommon in the social sciences that elaborate explanations... [in] advanced for processes whose reality remains problematic" (Portes et al. 1999, 218). Analysis of an incipient ASEAN citizenship, while may be dismissed for its lack of formal substance, still is a topic worthy of pursuit as it confirms the constructiveness of ASEAN as a regional organization for Southeast Asians. Its actualization will depend on a rethinking of the nature and future of ASEAN itself. A ritualized display of fidelity to its long held norms and values (Davies 2018) may not be enough in this case. Discourses on and for an imagined ASEAN citizen, while essential, can only deliver up to a point. Beyond resuscitating the regional organization however, the notion of ASEAN citizenship may serve as a potential instrument for the peoples of the region to re-orient the ongoing integration process towards them and chart the future anew for Southeast Asian regionalism.

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