

## THE FAILURE OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA AND THE ALTERNATIVE WAY OF COOPERATION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper examines the nature of regional integration in Africa and explores divergent ways through which sub-regional economic groups operate within their own regions. Using the library literature of research, findings show that, the traditional nature of regional integration on Africa is problematic, and other areas of cooperation must be considered. The paper concludes that, regional integration has not been able to solve economic problems of Africa, it therefore recommends for alternative integration.*

*Keywords: regional; integration; failure; alternative; economic; cooperation.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of integration is central to nations, individually and collectively. There are various theories that have attempted to explain and argue for national, regional and global integration. Regional integration arrangements are a part and parcel of the present global economic order and this trend is now an acknowledged future of the international scene. It has achieved a new meaning and new significance. Regional integration arrangements are mainly the outcome of necessity felt by nation-states to integrate their economies in order to achieve rapid economic development, decrease conflict, and build mutual trusts between the integrated units. The nation-state system, which has been the predominant pattern of international relations since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 is evolving towards a system in which regional groupings of states are becoming increasingly important vis-a-vis sovereign states. Some have argued that the idea of the state and its sovereignty has been made irrelevant by processes that are taking place at both the global and local level.

Closer integration of neighboring economies has often been seen by governments as a first step in creating a larger regional market for trade and investment. This is claimed to spur greater efficiency, productivity, gain and competitiveness, not just by lowering border barriers, but by reducing other costs and risks of trade and

investment. Bilateral and sub-regional trading arrangements have been advocated by governments as economic development tools, as they have been designed to promote economic deregulation. Such agreements have also aimed to reduce the risk of reversion towards protectionism, locking in reforms already made and encouraging further structural adjustment.

The new regional integration being promoted by social movements are, on the one hand, 'alternative' to the increasingly neo-liberal directions being taken, and the regional trade and investment liberalization programs being adopted or reinforced in the existing regional groupings of countries of the South. Social movement strategies for alternative regionalism are also designed to counter the so-called 'regional support' plans containing contradictory conditions set by foreign governments, particularly the United States and the European Union; by international institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization; and by transnational corporate interests. Thus, the alternative regional integration is alternative to what governments of the South are currently doing, or not doing, but should be doing; as well as being alternative to what the governments of the North and other agencies are trying to impose on the regions of the South. This paper therefore examines the meaning and nature of new regional integration, submit findings, conclude and advance some measures to facilitate alternative regional integration in Africa.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Regional integration is the joining of individual states within a region into a larger whole. The degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty. Deep integration that focuses on regulating the business environment in a more general sense is faced with many difficulties. Regional integration initiatives should fulfill at least eight important functions:

- i. the strengthening of trade integration in the region
- ii. the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development
- iii. the development of infrastructure programs in support of economic growth and regional integration
- iv. the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance;
- v. the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society
- vi. contribution to peace and security in the region
- vii. the building of environment programs at the regional level
- viii. the strengthening of the region's interaction with other regions of the world.

The notion of *alternative* in regionalism is certainly a matter of relativity and is subject to many interpretations. Despite its increasingly widespread use amongst activists and scholars in Southeast Asia, little effort has been made to clarify the definition of the term. In general, however, many would agree that, as a word, *alternative* implies to the values, norms, institutions and system that exist outside the traditional, established or mainstream system and institutions. In essence, alternative is a reformist effort to improve the existing system and institutions (Chandra, 2009: 2).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Regional economic groupings emerged and continued to be relevant in World Politics as far back as 1948, when the Benelux countries formed the first ever Customs Union. Subsequently, the European Coal and Steel Community was founded in 1951 and followed by the EEC common market in 1957, with the main aim of ‘preventing war between France and Germany’. This later metamorphosed into the now successful European Union.

In 1960, the Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA) was formed under the treaty of Montevideo, to promote industrialization through the expansion of the regional market. This was later succeeded by the Latin American Integration Agreement (LAIA) in 1980 which seeks to expand cooperation through bilateral trade agreements between member states according to the level of their economic development. Its goal of complete removal of barriers to trade over a 12 year period remains largely unattained, due to wide disparities in economic development between member states (Haokip, 2011).

The organization of Latin American States founded the Central American Common Market (CACM) in 1960 as a free trade Area to be attained within five years, and aspires to transform into a customs union, embodied in chapter 1, Articles 1 & 2 of its treaty. So far, integration remains difficult due to long years of social unrest and political instability in most of the member states. In 1967, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela etc, founded the ANDEAN PACT, with the original goal of a customs union as epitomized in their Cartagena Agreement of 1969. It hoped to attain a common market based on import-substitution, and centralized coordination of industries, as well as harmonization of foreign investments and repayments regulations. However, due to frequent disagreements between its member states, the association is yet to attain its stated objectives.

The Anglo Caribbean States formed the Caribbean Common market (CARICOM) in 1973 under the revised treaty of Chagaramas, to coordinate economic activities within the region while embracing import-substitution.

However, it is still far from attaining its stated objectives, as the member states' economies continue to record persistent declining rates of growth since the 1990's. Others include, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) founded in 1981 for political and military cooperation, and later strives to attain a customs union while at the same time, coordinating protection among its member states against foreign interference in the gulf.

Further, Argentina and Brazil founded the MERCOSUR in 1985, and were later joined by Paraguay and the Eastern Republic of Uruguay in 1990, which matured into a 'highly integrated' common market in 2001. It provided the institutional framework for settling disputes within the region, and serves as a 'bulwark' to the economies of member states. Currently, the organization is debating proposals for new political and institutional reforms, particularly the possibility of an all- embracing South American Community and a common regional Parliament. In 1967, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded under the framework of the Bangkok Declaration, which became a preference area in 1977 and metamorphosed into a free trade area in 1992 (AFTA).

The association provided the much needed framework for guarding against external aggression and for curtailing the threatening expansion of communism into the region. At present, the organization is seeking new innovations for social development and adapting cost-sharing techniques in priority regional projects. However, the expected target of 2008 is continually extended and aspires to attain a single production base while seeking international standards. Also, recently, they have jointly agreed to fast track their integration process under the 'Agreement for the Integration of Priority Sectors', and hope to attain an all-inclusive ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2020.

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was established in 1989 first as a dialogue forum but later transformed into a free trade area with a 'free trade Agreement' that is more or less nonbinding on member states. Currently, it seeks support for enhancing member states economies through a 'three stage processes for promoting the APEC initiative. Under the framework of its most recent Santiago Declaration of 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2004, the organization seeks to enhance interdependence and economic advancement of member states through expanded trade, investment, security and good governance throughout the region.

In Africa, the South African Customs Union (SACU) formed as far back as 1910, represents the oldest of such groupings in the region. Apart from the fact that it was first muted by the colonialists, after independence, member states willingly re-joined the group. This was followed by the Southern African Development

Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980, but later renamed in the 1992 'Lusaka Declaration' as the Southern Africa Development cooperation (SADC), when South Africa became a member. The original objective was to protect member states against the destabilizing tendencies of the apartheid regime in South Africa, while guaranteeing infrastructural assistance and policy coordination. In 1996, it gradually matured into a free trade area, under an institutional structure in 2001 as articulated in Article 5 of the 1992 SADC Treaty.

The Communauté Economique de L'ouest (CEAO) was founded in 1972, it strived to attain a free trade area with a compensation fund for loss of revenue for member states. In 1973, the Union Donniere ET Economique de L'Afrique Centralè (UDEAC) was formed but though it aspires to become a customs union, it has so far remained redundant. There is also the now defunct East African Community (1967), the Mano River Union (MRU). Of course, there is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) founded in 1975, to promote sustainable development and self-reliance throughout the sub-region.

Generally speaking, in all these regions, considerations of security remain paramount as the access to trade. For instance, the EU could be viewed as a practical effort to reduce conflicts and tensions between countries in Europe. In the case of the ANDEAN PACT, the framework successfully curtailed frequent rivalries among its member states, and help checkmate the threatening expansion of internal crisis of one country across national boundaries of the others.

In Southern Africa, the SADCC made no secret of its intention to provide material and military support to member states against the moribund apartheid regime of South Africa. Even the West African Economic Community has quite remarkable security undertone. The founding architects of the community particularly Nigeria, viewed the success of the community in the 'context of providing the much needed protection against external aggression'. Even the community now intervenes in internal conflicts within member states considered sufficiently threatening to the sub-region, to guard against cross-border spill over. Haokip (2011) summarizes the debate concerning the motive forces propelling the initiation of these regional groups as thus:

The frequent citing of investment gains even if there are no potential gains, which can only come if there is a confidence effect, independent of economics, all supports the idea that these regional groups have primarily non-economic motivations. Therefore, in counting the motives for different groups, the avalanche of recent military conflicts are counted as positive, because preventing future military conflicts is among the most commonly present motives or pre-existing conditions for the regions, along with political cohesion, trade access and pre-

existing economic integration...where basic national interests like political cohesion and security are important, it is more likely that the prospects for successful economic integration will be strengthened (Haokip, 2011: 3).

It is also note-worthy, that most of these economic groupings are confronted with similar difficulties, particularly in the areas of harmonization of policies to facilitate trade, and often remaining unions between and among unequal partners. However, some of the existing regional economic groupings have been more successful than others in their quest for sustainable economic development and self- reliance through regional economic integration. Suffice it to add that the most notable occurrence in the 1980s and 1990s has been the adoption of economic reform programs, later followed by political liberalization in several countries, and accompanied in several instances by other institutional reforms. While most countries have pursued economic reforms, the speed and depth of their effort has differed greatly, resulting in a multiplicity of outcomes not necessarily commensurate with the effort and resources committed to such reforms (Haokip, 2011). The variations in the extent of reforms have significantly affected cross-border interactions.

Thus, institutional integration can influence economic performance only if country specific macro-economic and sectoral development approaches do not diverge significantly. The reforms of the 1980s, however, were pursued without due attention being paid to this issue. It has indeed noted that past economic integration efforts in West Africa, for instance, have relied overwhelmingly on institutional mechanisms, ranging from negotiated tariff concessions and compensation schemes to the establishment of joint institutions for research, training and transportation. These arrangements can contribute to the integration of national economies but cannot do so in the absence of supporting and coherent macroeconomic and sectoral policies at the individual country level that ultimately determines the ability of individual countries to trade with each other (Haokip, 2011).

It is imperative to argue that West African countries started structural reforms from quite contrasting macroeconomic situations. Many of them have a long track-record of macroeconomic instability. Behind high tariff walls and over-valued exchange rates, inward-looking policies led to significant shifts of the costs of import-protection on the shoulders of exporters in the form of reduced real prices for their products. Haas and Schmitter (1964) have shown several instances in which exporters were 'taxed' heavily as a result of import protection. It is estimated that the level of implicit taxation of exports in Nigeria was 55 per cent to 90 per cent in the 1980s and insignificantly lower in Benin and Burkina Faso. Implicit taxation often resulted from overvaluation of domestic currencies: in Ghana, for instance, the currency was overvalued by 30-to-70 per cent in the 1980s, while Senegal's currency was overvalued by 51-to-64 per cent in the same period.

In the reform effort, countries have used trade policy as a substitute to a comprehensive macroeconomic policy adjustment which would have required significant exchange rate realignment. The active use of trade policy instruments, including their constant revision as short-term macroeconomic tools — has, however, proved incompatible with regional integration. This requires stability of trade policy instruments, harmonization of tariff codes and removal of quantitative import restrictions in order to encourage cross-border investments and trade. Domestic macroeconomic policies have adversely affected regional integration by leading to the development of costly production structures, draining scarce foreign exchange.

Furthermore, Haas and Schmitter (1964) have observed that “the actual structure of production and trade within the region does not follow (the) pattern of comparative advantage”. They suggest that uncoordinated trade, exchange rate and agricultural pricing policies have led to a distorted incentive structure that encourages the inefficient allocation of productive resources and other wasteful activities, including smuggling and other forms of rent-seeking behavior. Agricultural pricing policies, for example, vary extensively, resulting in very different producer prices for crops in different countries as well as in the application of subsidies in some countries. Such discrepancies are known to lead to substantial unrecorded cross-border flows. A good example is the parallel market in imported rice. Mye (1968) has suggested that the variation in intensity, sequencing and scope of reforms has had a significant negative impact on the outcomes of both the reform process and on the objective of regional co-operation and integration. Again,

It astonishes ... that while SAPs have become a feature in Africa since 1985, and (regional integration arrangements) have been pursued with renewed vigor especially over the last five years, there has been no serious, systematic attempt by any agency or donor to operationalize effectively ways in which integration and adjustment might be interwoven and made mutually reinforcing (Mye, 1968: 45).

To sum up, while reforms have led to substantial improvements in the domestic policy environment, they have been far less successful in eliciting adequate supply response and in increasing recorded cross-border transactions. This partly results from the limited co-ordination of different approaches to reform as well as other structural constraints to production, including inadequate infrastructure, scarce credit and poor labor skills.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The functionalist blueprint based its assumptions on the belief that, in a world of economic interdependence, apolitical problems such as social, technical and humanitarian could be prioritized and solved. It insists that in a

world of economic interdependence, common economic interests create the need for international institutions and rules. Its assumptions emphasized a practical approach to problem solving insisting that this could be achieved by prioritizing areas of common interests while concluding that cooperation in economic and social fields may eventually spill over into the political fields.

Functionalism pessimists strongly illuminate the setbacks involved in a regional integration programme due to the reluctance of member states in a regional organization to transfer sovereignty to a higher level particularly in areas of strong national interests. For them, this condition would only reproduce supra-national body with state-like functions and solely dominated by the most powerful states. They point also to the inadequacy of the logic of spill over, since there is no guarantee of stopping neither war through functional cooperation nor the seeming difficulty in entirely separating social, technical or economic problems from the political. The theory also laid too much emphasis on technocratic logic to the detriment of the importance of politics, while some dismissed it for its “poor record of prediction” and “lack of scientific rigor”.

According to Goldman (1964), wholesale application of the thesis of functionalism in the examination of Alternative Regional Integration and its short comings may not be entirely useful as so far, cooperation in the social, technical and economic fields have not automatically yielded increased dividends in other areas within the community. Further, one major setback bogging Alternative Regionalism remains the reluctance of member states to transfer decision-making powers to the regional body which still lay squarely with the national governments of member states. Due to the inability of the community to enact and enforce laws, its legislations and protocols are often left at the mercy of the national governments of member states to decide whether to enforce or not. Therefore, the success of functionalism within the frame work of Alternative Regionalism is severely limited to the extent that the basic ingredients for the success of its basic assumptions are quite non-existent in the case of Alternative Regional Integration – there is no guarantee that people and governments would always move in rational directions (Goldman, 1964).

In reality, functionalist thesis provides an insight into the operations of international organizations, by successfully tracing the origins of international cooperation to functional interdependence. Its sectoral approach to cooperation and recognition of non-governmental and trans-national actors in the international system however remain quite useful only if actors consistently harmonize their interests by compromising their differences and reaping mutual benefits, without down grading nation-states as important actors.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is clear that the old time regional integration schemes have failed to substantially bring about integration, economic development and political stability in the various regions of the world. Thus, The new alternative regionalisms being promoted by social movements are, on the one hand, 'alternative' to the increasingly neo-liberal directions being taken, and the regional trade and investment liberalization programs being adopted or reinforced in the existing regional groupings of countries of the South. Social movement strategies for alternative regionalisms are also designed to counter the so-called 'regional support' plans containing contradictory conditions set by foreign governments, particularly the US and the EU; by international institutions, particularly the IMF, World Bank and the WTO; and by transnational corporate interests .

Thus, the alternative regionalisms being promoted are alternatives to what governments of the South are currently doing, or not doing, but should be doing; as well as being alternatives to what the governments of the North and other agencies are trying to impose on the regions of the South. However, the new ideas and debates on alternative regionalism are also expressed in the plural because of the perception amongst analysts and activists that:

- i. they are still in the phase of exploring a variety of possible socio-economic and economic alternatives reflecting different political and ideological perspectives and cultural modalities within their respective countries and regions;
- ii. there are other new economic and environmental perspectives and challenges emerging within their organizations and communities, countries and regions, and in relation to the interlinked planetary ecosystems that have yet to be fully explored; and
- iii. despite the many common aims and concerns within and between the respective regional initiatives, the eventual outcomes of consultative regional processes between social movements themselves, and engagements between them and their governments, separately or together, will not be exactly the same for the different regional groupings emerging in the South.

There are, however, growing exchanges and mutual learning and a number of commonalities within the debates and the proposals emerging from the regional and inter-regional interactions between social movements in regard to alternative regionalisms.

- i. It is notable that, the first and overriding imperative is that the policies and programs within the emerging regions of the South *cannot and must not be dictated by external agencies*, such as the IMF and the World Bank.

They must also not be constrained by blanket terms and conditions and the tight and *a priori* time-frames set by the WTO. These integration projects must not be shaped to suit the aims and interests of powerful foreign governments and ‘donor agencies’, or international investors and exporters, production or service companies etc. These historic regionalization processes must be shaped and driven by processes internal to these regions, between peoples’ organizations, as such, and between them and their governments.

ii. The second requirement relates to the extreme complexities of creating regional programs and inclusive regional institutions, and policy instruments that reflect and accommodate the very different circumstances and diverse domestic interests within the participating countries. Thus, all such regional arrangements *must emerge through inclusive democratic negotiations* for the creation of mutually acceptable and appropriate policies and programs within these regions. This is all the more essential in the context in which a number of these regions of the South are characterized by huge imbalances in size and levels of development between their many small developing and least developed (LDC) member states and the larger economies within such regions. It is only through their own joint engagements with the respective dominant governmental – and entrepreneurial – forces within regional negotiations, and according to agreed criteria and principles, that the smaller or economically weaker countries and communities would be able to create more favorable terms and equitable outcomes in their regional relations.

- i. The directly associated premise to ensure corrective and equitable regional arrangements that would address the challenges of uneven development within and between the participating countries, is that cross-border economic programs *must counter the laissez faire or unregulated operations of ‘market forces’*. The very *raison d’etre* of business ventures is to seek out and take advantage of or exploit the disparate levels of development, the unequal economic and technological capacities, the uneven labor, health, safety and environmental regulations etc, in the different countries within each region. Under conditions of extensive liberalization in these countries such ‘free market’ forces and cross-border ventures inevitably reinforce these imbalances, and encourage competition, and a ‘race to the bottom’ between governments seeking to attract foreign investors.

Such exploitative strategies have to be countered by public institutions and regulations but there are many forms of political, technical and other weaknesses in the existing governments in many of the countries of the South, most of which are also under the sway of neo-liberal forces from within and without. Thus, such regional policies and programs *cannot be left to largely inaccessible remote inter-governmental negotiations*, and ‘top-down’ processes. Inter-governmental agreements and joint programs are, in the final analysis, essential to regional

development programs. But, in order to ensure full information and effective public inputs towards the creation of appropriate regional development programs, these have to be built through ‘bottom-up’ processes of cross-border social movement cooperation, and full popular participation in formal regional decision-shaping engagements.

The emergent regional entities will also have to be *created gradually and built incrementally*. This must include “special and differential” terms to accommodate the diversities and different levels of capacity and preparedness of various economies and communities. Such flexibilities would also allow for sub-regional programs within real geo-economic regions that straddle borders, and which have been artificially divided by political frontiers (Collins, 2008). These ‘real’ regions often include the same natural resources, the same ecological/topographical features, and the same peoples/communities that have been arbitrarily cut up by the boundaries drawn by colonialism. Thus, regional groupings could more appropriately be conceived of as the re-groupment of communities and local peoples, as well as the nations in which they are situated. Although inter-governmental regional agreements in all spheres are essential, such communities of nations should be (re) conceived as multifaceted processes rather than as simple unitary integrated economic or political entities.

In this context, one of the vital aims of regionalization programs is actually to restructure much of their production and strategically redirect much of their trade towards their own local, national and regional markets. On the one hand, this will reduce such countries’ external dependencies and excessive exposure to external shocks. On the other hand, the reconceptualization of the role, and the reduction of international trade, altogether, is increasingly being recognized throughout the world as a strategic imperative in the circumstances of looming global environmental catastrophe. International trade and transport is increasingly recognized as making heavy contributions to global carbon emissions and global warming and climate destabilizations.

### **A Critique of Alternative Regional Integration**

Global theorists and the promoters of economic globalization depict the ‘breaking up’ of the single integrated global economy as boding ill for the world. They paint scenarios of growing competition, increasing conflicts and deepening global divisions and poverty. Whereas, it is precisely to the contrary. It is the imposition of one set of ‘global’ rules, and one dominant paradigm favoring the stronger economies and their corporations, that has created the increasing polarization across the world today between the rich and the poor, between the strong and the weak. It is the economic globalization promoted by neo-liberal theorists, institutions, governments and corporations behind them, which is deepening the poverty of billions of people in the world, in favor of small minorities, and creating the conditions for increasing tensions and conflicts in the world today. The reality is that

‘neo-mercantilist’ trade wars are already underway between the largest powers and/in their own respective regions, against each other, in each other’s ‘sphere of influence’, and against the emerging regional communities of the South.

The creation of regional communities of nations and peoples that are gradually being taken up by social movements, and even some of the more progressive and visionary governments of the South, hold out the opposite to what crude globalization forces demand and foster. It is, in large measure, the reconfiguration of global relations through the creation of alternative regional strategies shaped by different, equitable and sustainable development paradigms that will contribute to essential processes of de-globalization. These alternative processes would create a range of more varied regional and continental socio-economic, ecological and political communities within which diverse and appropriate policies and programs can be democratically developed and applied. This could incrementally erode the single dominant global economy and misconceived neo-liberal paradigm. Such alternatives to neo-liberal globalization would not only change people-people and South-South relations and situations, but also South-North relations and inter-actions, and this would be to the benefit of all of humanity and our common planetary home.

The so-called *alternative regionalism* is becoming a popular concept particularly given the increasing role and importance of non-governmental element, or civil society, also commonly referred to as the *track-three*, in the institutional development and community building of Southeast Asia. Despite the widespread use of the terms, there is yet a common understanding amongst relevant actors in the regionalization process as to what alternative regionalism actually entails of. For most of *mainstream regionalists*, on the one hand, alternative regionalism today is associated with the move from the old or first wave of, regionalism to the new, or second wave, of regionalism, where regionalism now takes place in a multipolar world order, emerges as a spontaneous process, open and outward in character and involves a multidimensional processes (Alatas, 2001).

On the other hand, the so-called *progressive regionalists*, including those of leftist-oriented activists and scholars, argue that the idea of alternative regionalism is well-rooted in the Latin American model of regionalism, which emerges as a response to the domination of Western imperialism. Again, the term even causes more confusion in Southeast Asia. Leftist-oriented activists, looking up to the Latin American regionalism model, envision a regional integration project in Southeast Asia capable to response to the hostile Western dominated forces of globalization process. For these activists, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is the main integration initiative in the region to date, has pursued regional integration project without a clear vision (Chavez 2005). In contrast, mainstream economists and political scientists in the region are influenced by

the success of some Western-led model of regional integration projects (e.g., the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)), and are longing to adopt similar initiatives in the region.

Fortunately, regionalism and the associated regionalization process in ASEAN are not as black and white as perceived by these two ideological camps. To date, ASEAN has adopted a range of models of integration projects to suit the interest of the member countries. It has somewhat able to increase its stature in international diplomacy so as to enable the Association to cope with global challenges as many progressive regionalists envision the grouping to be, but, at the same time, it has also facilitate greater dominance of non-ASEAN entities in the economic and socio-cultural aspects of its cooperation.

Having said this, it is also extremely insufficient to place ASEAN in the category of alternative. The prevalent indifferent attitude of the people in Southeast Asia towards the Association and the increase push by civil society groups to make this regional grouping more relevant to its people are evident enough to indicate that ASEAN is far from being a perfect regional institution. As ASEAN moves towards achieving the so-called ASEAN Community by 2015, policy-makers and civil society alike talk about the importance of people and their interests in the Association's regional projects and activities. ASEAN policy-makers, for example, have advanced the idea of a *people-oriented* ASEAN as a way to buy the support of wider constituencies in endorsing the grouping's initiatives. On the other hand, civil society remains suspicious of this idea and has launched and pushed instead for the *people-centred* ASEAN concept, which put the *people* at the centre of the regionalization process of the Association.

The theoretical and practical debates on and about alternative regionalism in Southeast Asian context has been minimal and far from sufficient. Given the increase dynamics of civil society's efforts to reform ASEAN, alternative regionalism, or the concept attached to it, will hold an important position in the analysis of civil society dynamics in Southeast Asian regionalism that have been initiated by scholars and activists from within the region that tries to fill this gap. More importantly, it is also an effort to provide greater clarity of the dynamics attached to civil society's engagement with ASEAN as a whole.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its own context, alternative regionalism is certainly in the making in Southeast Asia, and civil society is playing a crucial role in promoting it. Various actors in Southeast Asian regionalization process have different ideas as to what *alternative regionalism* entails of in the ASEAN context. One common thread in the promotion of alternative regionalism amongst these non-state actors is the question of the participation of the people in

ASEAN policy-making process. Civil society in the region is increasingly calling for ASEAN to be more down-to-earth and inclusive in its efforts to shape and determine the system of governance in the region. In recent years, civil society's search for an alternative regionalism in Southeast Asia has been expanded, with new institutions networks are established to allow greater space for civil society's participation in ASEAN-related activities. At the same time, ASEAN has responded positively to this call, and encourages its officials to become more involved in civil-society led activities. The Association has also launched its new principle of people-oriented ASEAN. However it is not clear as to whether these initiatives are sufficient to satisfy the demand of wider civil society groups for the Association to adopt a more optimistic people-centred principle. This drive to alternative regionalism in ASEAN should spur other regional blocs to move towards alternation regionalism. It is also recommended that civil society organizations should partner with states and also challenge the States for the socio-economic and political development of countries in the South. Similarly, civil societies from the South should have a forum strong enough to encourage others and constitute a formidable opposition to the States that are not development friendly.

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