



## OPEN ACCESS

## EDITED BY

Eric E. Otenyo,  
Northern Arizona University, United States

## REVIEWED BY

Aleksey Kolpakov,  
Northern Arizona University, United States  
Earlene Camarillo,  
Western Oregon University, United States

## \*CORRESPONDENCE

Pushpanathan Sundram  
✉ pushpanathan\_sundram@cmu.ac.th

RECEIVED 06 June 2024

ACCEPTED 04 February 2025

PUBLISHED 21 February 2025

## CITATION

Sundram P (2025) Network governance in  
ASEAN: fostering regional cooperation and  
integration.

*Front. Polit. Sci.* 7:1434595.  
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2025.1434595

## COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Sundram. This is an open-access  
article distributed under the terms of the  
[Creative Commons Attribution License](#)  
(CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction  
in other forums is permitted, provided the  
original author(s) and the copyright owner(s)  
are credited and that the original publication  
in this journal is cited, in accordance with  
accepted academic practice. No use,  
distribution or reproduction is permitted  
which does not comply with these terms.

# Network governance in ASEAN: fostering regional cooperation and integration

Pushpanathan Sundram\*

School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

This article examines network governance (NG) within the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its sectoral communities, specifically the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The goal is to explore NG's importance in fostering cooperation among ASEAN member states and addressing regional challenges. The study begins by providing an overview of ASEAN and its objectives, highlighting the crucial role of NG in promoting collaboration and policymaking through ASEAN processes. It then offers a comprehensive literature review that evaluates the conceptual framework of NG and previous research related to its significance for ASEAN. The article further explores theories and scholarly works discussing NG within ASEAN, offering insights into key themes and discussions in the literature. Specific examples from the three sectoral communities are included based on an analysis of ASEAN NG mechanisms and structures. The evaluation of NG effectiveness in tackling regional challenges considers the contributions of state actors, such as government representatives and non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organizations and private sector entities. This analysis reveals the inherent challenges and opportunities in implementing NG within ASEAN frameworks. It also underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between state actors and NSAs and the need for supportive institutional frameworks and mechanisms to enhance NG effectiveness in ASEAN. Overall, this article aims to deepen the understanding of NG within ASEAN, illuminating its role in promoting regional integration, addressing challenges, and advancing development across ASEAN's three sectoral communities.

## KEYWORDS

ASEAN, European Union, network governance, regional integration, community, networked policy effectiveness

## Introduction

Founded in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization of 10 member states in Southeast Asia. In response to the region's geopolitical challenges, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand acknowledged the necessity for a regional grouping to foster peace and security among the newly independent states. This was essential for preserving regional stability during the post-colonial era, characterized by subversive communist movements and a series of territorial disputes in the context of the Cold War. As a result, ASEAN was established and later expanded to include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam, incorporating all Southeast Asian nations by the 20th century. Today, the absence of open confrontations and war among its members (Nesadurai, 2009) stands as a significant testimony to ASEAN's success. Furthermore, the formation of the three ASEAN sectoral communities has broadened the

Association's objectives, addressing not only security issues but also challenges arising from economic and sociocultural factors.

Establishing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 represents a significant milestone, as economic integration is vital to ASEAN's broader integration goals. The AEC creates a single market and production base, facilitating the free flow of goods, services, and investment, along with more flexible movement of skilled labor throughout the region (ASEAN, n.d.-a). This enhances competitiveness, attracts investment, and promotes sustainable development among member states. The AEC is arguably the most successful pillar of ASEAN, which is evident in the progress of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) established in 1992 and the conclusion and implementation of various free trade agreements that have provided economic benefits for its members. Conversely, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) fosters political and security dialogue, cooperation, and conflict mitigation among member states and ASEAN's strategic partners to ensure regional peace and stability. It also addresses non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism, transnational crime, and cybersecurity while advocating for good governance, human rights, and democracy (ASEAN, n.d.-c). Political-security cooperation inspired ASEAN's founding and remains a crucial pillar, where ASEAN's principles and norms are firmly upheld to preserve member states' autonomy. The third pillar of the ASEAN Community, the ASEAN Social-Cultural Community (ASCC), focuses on social development, human rights, and cultural understanding within the region. It fosters initiatives related to education, health, disaster management, women's empowerment, youth engagement, environmental sustainability, and more. Its goal is to cultivate a resilient and inclusive ASEAN Community that prioritizes the well-being and rights of its people (ASEAN, n.d.-d).

The Association has faced its share of scrutiny and criticism. Its limited institutionalization, marked by a lack of binding legal mechanisms and centralized authority, has been identified as a barrier to progress and performance. These factors have led to ASEAN being labeled as a talk shop. The organization has consistently been urged to improve its institutionalization and learn from predecessors like the EU. Therefore, this article aims to apply the network governance (NG) approach to provide an alternative perspective on ASEAN's performance, reconciling the idea that the current institutional design is a deliberate choice by the ASEAN founders and is supported by subsequent ASEAN leadership. By acknowledging this, we can better analyze ASEAN's performance, looking beyond the shortcomings attributed to its institutional design. This does not suggest that the reasons for the design are insignificant, but rather that recognizing it as a conscious choice to maintain such a structure may imply that focusing on it is not a primary concern.

The article seeks to conceptualize the Association as an NG framework, organizing 'actors and institutions into recognizable sets of policy-relevant interactions' (Howlett, 2002). This concept is rooted in Michael Howlett's policy network theory (PNT), which allows us to view 'policymaking as involving more or less fluid sets of state and societal actors connected by specific interests' (Howlett, 2002). The perspective is especially significant considering that the ASEAN Community is represented by three pillars: the AEC, APSC, and ASCC. As a result, it includes member states and various participants, including government representatives and non-state actors (NSAs), such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector entities.

Within each community, there is interaction among various groups of actors, ideas, and diverse interests, all working to achieve similar objectives, address shared challenges, and promote common interests (Chandra et al., 2017).

The level of engagement and the extent to which ASEAN norms impact each sectoral community will vary, indicating that each community's achievements or shortcomings will differ. This underscores the importance of establishing an alternative perspective, like the NG approach proposed in this article, to assess the performance of ASEAN sectoral communities and comprehend the progress made by the Association to date. Consequently, this article argues that fostering NG in ASEAN is essential for enhancing ASEAN's progress and performance.

By employing the NG approach, we can more accurately assess the achievements and shortcomings of the work of the ASEAN sectoral communities. It provides a new perspective for comprehending ASEAN's performance. In this context, the objective is not to defend ASEAN's shortcomings but to understand how ASEAN pursues its goals amid the various challenges each sectoral community faces. It is essential not to overlook ASEAN's principles and norms, which critics often view as obstacles to achieving its goals, but rather to effectively nurture an open and dynamic NG framework within existing and new ASEAN institutional arrangements. This will promote an inclusive and adaptable approach that supports integration while upholding ASEAN's core principles and norms. This research offers an alternative viewpoint on ASEAN's institutional design by drawing from existing literature and case studies and reviewing academic articles, books, reports, and policy documents related to NG in ASEAN. A key focus will be understanding the rationale for promoting NG and showcasing its current examples within ASEAN, laying the groundwork for adopting more NG strategies in the work of the Association.

## Literature review

As articulated by Howlett (2002), policy network theory offers a fundamental perspective for understanding the dynamics of NG. Howlett defines policy networks as fluid constellations of state and NSAs collaborating to influence policymaking. This theory emphasizes the importance of shared interests, negotiated agreements, and reciprocal relationships in addressing complex governance challenges. It aligns with ASEAN's organizational framework, where collaboration among diverse stakeholders is essential for promoting regional integration and addressing transnational issues.

Howlett (2002) emphasizes that the effectiveness of policy networks depends on the participating actors' structural and relational characteristics. For example, networks characterized by trust and interdependence tend to achieve policy outcomes more successfully than those hindered by power imbalances or conflicting priorities. This insight is especially relevant to ASEAN's consensus-driven decision-making processes, which heavily rely on trust and mutual respect among member states. The AEC, APSC, and ASCC exemplify this dynamic by uniting diverse actors to pursue shared goals while acknowledging individual state sovereignty. Integrating Howlett's policy network theory into the broader discourse on NG underscores the adaptability and relevance of the frameworks to ASEAN's unique governance structure. It also provides a theoretical foundation for assessing the successes and limitations of ASEAN's NG mechanisms,

offering a roadmap for enhancing collaborative efforts within the region.

Building on this foundation, NG is a collaborative framework where various actors, including state and non-state entities, come together to tackle shared challenges and achieve common objectives. It is defined as ‘entities that combine collaborative public goods and service provision with collective policymaking’ (Isett et al., 2011). The framework is founded on principles of trust, reciprocity, negotiation, and mutual interdependence among actors (Provan and Kenis, 2008), acknowledging that no single actor or institution can effectively address complex, multifaceted issues alone. NG provides an adaptive model for tackling transnational and cross-sectoral challenges, such as those common in ASEAN, where differing political systems, economic disparities, and cultural differences demand inclusive and flexible governance mechanisms. By facilitating collaboration among state actors, CSOs, businesses, and academia, NG creates a platform for dialogue and collective action that corresponds with ASEAN’s regional integration, security, and sustainability goals.

However, perspectives on NG’s efficacy within ASEAN differ. Jetschke (2009) critiques NG as a compromised structure due to significant implementation gaps and a lack of institutionalization, undermining ASEAN’s ability to achieve its stated goals. This critique highlights ASEAN’s reliance on informal agreements and consensus-based decision-making, which often delays policy implementation and limits enforcement. Conversely, Poocharoen and Sovacool (2012) argue that NG’s effectiveness depends on its context and inherent characteristics. They observe that ASEAN’s informal structures, while seemingly weak, provide the flexibility needed to accommodate the diverse interests of member states. Furthermore, the involvement of NSAs, such as CSOs, private enterprises, and academic institutions, enhances NG’s capacity by introducing expertise, resources, and innovation into the policymaking process. While challenges like accountability gaps and stakeholder coordination exist, NG remains a promising governance model capable of addressing ASEAN’s evolving needs and advancing its goals.

NG further signifies an innovative paradigm where interdependent actors collaborate to tackle complex societal challenges. This approach is especially pertinent in contexts marked by fragmentation or the lack of hierarchical structures. Kapucu and Hu (2020) describe NG as a governance framework based on trust, resource sharing, and negotiated decision-making. In contrast to traditional governance models that function hierarchically, NG stresses horizontal interactions, promoting inclusivity and adaptability. These features render NG essential for addressing multifaceted issues such as transboundary security threats, environmental sustainability, and regional economic integration, which surpass the jurisdictional limits and capabilities of individual state actors.

Keast (2022) underscores the pivotal role of NG in bridging fragmented governance systems, particularly in intergovernmental organizations like ASEAN. In such settings, where diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts converge, NG offers a flexible framework for fostering collaboration and mutual understanding. This adaptability is achieved by establishing shared norms that create a common ground for decision-making and cooperative action. NG can support reconciling divergent interests and priorities among member states by promoting capacity-building initiatives and enabling dynamic, responsive governance structures. This is particularly significant in ASEAN, where member states maintain

varying levels of institutional capacity and governance frameworks. NG facilitates a platform for dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that regional goals, such as economic integration and security cooperation, can be pursued to accommodate each member state’s unique characteristics.

Sørensen (2002) connects NG to deliberative democracy, highlighting its potential to enhance inclusivity by involving marginalized actors in governance processes, such as CSOs and grassroots movements. This inclusion fosters a broader range of perspectives and ensures that governance outcomes are more representative and equitable. However, Sørensen cautions that NG is not without its risks. Democratic deficits may arise if elite actors dominate decision-making processes or if less powerful stakeholders are excluded, leading to inequalities in representation and outcomes. These challenges underscore the critical need for robust accountability mechanisms to monitor and balance the dynamics within NG frameworks. Provan and Kenis (2008) provide further insights by categorizing NG into three governance modes: participant-governed networks, lead organization-governed networks, and network administrative organizations. Each mode presents unique strengths and weaknesses, varying transparency, accountability, and effectiveness implications. For example, participant-governed networks may foster inclusivity and shared ownership but risk inefficiency. In contrast, lead organization-governed networks and network administrative organizations may offer streamlined decision-making but face challenges in ensuring equitable representation of all stakeholders. These classifications provide a valuable lens for understanding how NG can be optimized to address the complex governance challenges organizations like ASEAN face.

Agranoff and Kolpakov (2023) delve into the nuanced ability of NG to balance the dynamics of collaboration and competition among diverse stakeholders. This balancing act is particularly relevant in the context of ASEAN, a region marked by various political systems, economic disparities, and cultural diversity. The scholars highlight NG’s inherent flexibility as a key asset, enabling it to address regional objectives such as economic integration, security cooperation, and sustainable development while respecting the sovereignty of individual member states. This capacity to adapt and mediate between competing interests makes NG a useful governance model for ASEAN.

Huxham and Vangen (2013) describe collaborative advantage as the necessity of building trust, aligning shared goals, and recognizing mutual interdependence among participants in NG. Their framework highlights the intentional management of power relations and the reconciliation of differing interests to achieve results that individual organizations might not reach independently. This theoretical approach is useful for examining ASEAN’s NG initiatives, where inclusion and collaboration among various stakeholders are essential for meeting regional objectives.

The adaptability of NG closely aligns with the “ASEAN Way,” a guiding principle that emphasizes consensus-building and non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states. These principles ensure that cooperation does not undermine national autonomy, allowing member states to pursue shared goals without feeling pressured to conform to a rigid governance structure. By fostering trust, facilitating dialogue, and accommodating its member states’ diverse political and economic realities, NG offers a governance framework for ASEAN that respects sovereignty and promotes collective action. This alignment between NG’s foundational ethos and

the ASEAN Way highlights NG's potential to navigate the complexities of regional governance effectively.

## Network governance in ASEAN and EU

To understand and conceptualize ASEAN's regionalism, we examine how the ASEAN and the EU differ significantly in their approaches to NG while sharing the common goal of promoting regional cooperation and integration. Comparing ASEAN and the EU in terms of regional governance highlights their differing historical contexts, levels of integration, and institutional frameworks. Understanding these differences is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance regional cooperation through NG in each context.

Both are 'regional organizations with legal personalities' established to 'promote peace' (Koh, 2017). The EU has a longer history of regional integration than ASEAN. The EU's NG model has evolved through several stages, from the European Coal and Steel Community to the creation of supranational institutions and collaborative decision-making processes as a political and economic union. In contrast, ASEAN initially emphasized political-security cooperation before broadening its scope to include economic and socio-cultural aspects. Thus, differences in historical context have influenced the NG approaches in each region.

Furthermore, the EU has achieved a greater degree of integration, characterized by a common currency, the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, and shared policies and regulations. In contrast, ASEAN adopts a more decentralized and diverse approach. It allows member states greater flexibility in decision-making while maintaining varied political, economic, and social systems. The diverse nature of ASEAN presents challenges for deeper NG compared to the EU, where member states have surrendered more sovereignty (Koh, 2017).

The EU has established a complex institutional framework that includes supranational bodies, such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, tasked with proposing and implementing policies. Decision-making in the EU involves extensive negotiations and consensus-building among EU institutions and member states. In contrast, ASEAN adopts a more intergovernmental approach, where decision-making is guided by consensus among member states, often in informal settings. Concerning the transboundary haze issue that periodically affects parts of the region, the ASEAN principle of "equality, quiet persuasion, consultation, consensus, and shared responsibility has proven to be the most practical and agreeable to all in ASEAN" (Chalermpananupap, 1999). While this may not be the most effective policymaking approach for urgent issues, it is not a "recipe for paralysis" (Chalermpananupap, 1999). This distinction in decision-making processes underscores the differing levels of institutionalization and integration between ASEAN and the EU.

The EU member states share a common cultural and historical background, facilitating cooperation and integration. In contrast, ASEAN is characterized by its diverse cultures, religions, languages, and varying levels of economic development, making consensus-building and policy harmonization more challenging. Because of these socio-cultural and economic differences, the EU's NSA experience may not directly apply to ASEAN. Furthermore, ASEAN and the EU face regional challenges in shaping their NSA approaches. For

instance, ASEAN deals with territorial disputes, non-traditional security threats, and varying levels of economic development. Meanwhile, the EU addresses challenges related to deepening integration, managing the Eurozone, and meeting the needs of its diverse member states. These differing challenges necessitate tailored NSA approaches specific to each region (Elliott, 2012).

Unlike ASEAN's relatively small and weak secretariat, the EU features a "powerful secretariat known as the European Commission" (Koh, 2017). Moreover, the European Commission functions like a government, possessing the authority to enter into treaties and propose legislation (Koh, 2017). The lack of EU-style political and economic institutionalized integration is not necessarily a weakness but a strength for ASEAN countries, as it keeps integration processes flexible and maintains a legally non-binding status (Berkofsky, 2005). Except for matters related to regional foreign and security policies, EU decisions are made through weighted voting, which assigns different votes to member countries. In contrast, ASEAN primarily reaches decisions through consultations and consensus among its member states, barring certain areas governed by the '10 minus X' implementation formula (Madhur, 2019).

Despite this, ASEAN's approach enables member states to maintain their sovereignty while pursuing shared regional stability and economic integration objectives. The ASEAN Way exemplifies this soft institutionalization by promoting non-binding agreements, consultation, and consensus as the primary decision-making methods. By adopting this flexible and informal NG model, ASEAN reconciles its member states' diverse interests and preferences while encouraging regional cooperation and integration. Moreover, the EU's transfer of sovereignty to supranational institutions contradicts ASEAN's principle of non-interference, and closely imitating the EU model may worsen economic disparities within the region (Elliott, 2012). Rather than emulating the EU model, ASEAN should continue to embrace its soft institutionalization, fostering dialogue to support regional stability and development (Amador, 2021). At the same time, member states remain grounded in their collective capacity and coherent strategy to address regional challenges effectively.

While both ASEAN and the EU aim to strengthen regional cooperation through NG, they show significant differences. Therefore, the EU's NG model cannot be replicated in ASEAN due to these distinctions. Considering ASEAN as an NG emphasizes a networked approach to exchanges within the Association's authoritative decisions, structured interactions, and social constructs. These are viewed as frameworks and practices of legitimate authority, involving interactions among key stakeholders, including state and NSAs, and reflecting ASEAN's composition in relation to its shared values, practices, and norms (Colebatch, 2014).

## Network governance relevance for ASEAN

Decisions within ASEAN arise from the intentions and interests of its member states and stakeholders, emphasizing the need to focus on the member states that shape the Association. Viewing ASEAN as a networked governance model highlights the key role these states play in determining its trajectory. This shifts the focus from mere institutional change to a more inclusive approach that encourages collective action by engaging diverse participants such as CSOs, businesses, academia, and international bodies. The strategy fosters



dialogue, cooperation, and inclusive decision-making to address regional challenges. Thus, the networked governance concept is particularly pertinent for ASEAN.

As Poocharoen and Sovacool (2012) emphasize, the involvement of NSAs is crucial for keeping an organization adaptive and innovative. Fixed membership within an organization can lead to similar outcomes, which, if negative, can significantly impact the entity's effectiveness. NSAs play a vital role in strengthening ASEAN by contributing grassroots perspectives, expertise, and advocacy, ensuring diverse stakeholders are inclusively and actively engaged in decision-making. The NSAs' objectives are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power but to unite people in advancing shared goals and interests (UNDP, 2006). By operating on ethical, cultural, scientific, religious, or philanthropic principles (UNDP, 2006), NSAs provide valuable insights, local knowledge, and alternative viewpoints that enhance those of state actors. Through dialogue, policy advocacy, and supporting the implementation of initiatives, NSAs amplify the voices of marginalized communities, fostering sustainable and inclusive development within ASEAN.

Businesses play a vital role in ASEAN's NG processes, especially within the AEC. As engines of economic growth and development, enterprises provide resources, investments, and technological expertise to regional initiatives. They engage in public-private partnerships, participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives, and collaborate with governments and CSOs to address socioeconomic challenges. This involvement fosters economic integration, innovation, and sustainable business practices throughout ASEAN. For instance, the ASEAN Business Advisory Committee (ASEAN-BAC), launched in April 2003, offers "private sector feedback and guidance to enhance ASEAN's efforts toward economic integration" and identifies "priority areas for the consideration of ASEAN Leaders" (ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), n.d.). The ASEAN-BAC has been essential in voicing private-sector concerns within regional processes through platforms that involve ASEAN policymakers at both national and regional levels (Karim and Heryanto, 2022).

Academic institutions and think tanks contribute to NG in ASEAN by engaging in research, policy analysis, and knowledge sharing. These institutions serve as epistemic communities, developing and circulating ideas and normative beliefs, helping to identify legitimate participants in the policy process and shaping how conflicts of interest will be resolved (Wollmann, 1989). They offer evidence-based recommendations, expertise, and capacity-building support to guide decision-making processes. By pinpointing emerging issues, evaluating policy impacts, and influencing regional agendas related to trade, security, and social development, they enhance ASEAN's capacity to tackle complex regional challenges (Chandra et al., 2017).

NG is particularly relevant for ASEAN, which operates as a decentralized intergovernmental and consensus-driven organization. ASEAN's institutional framework, characterized by insufficient hierarchical control and legally binding agreements, aligns closely with NG principles. Sørensen (2002) notes that NG promotes collaborative decision-making while respecting the autonomy of participating actors. This is essential for ASEAN, where member states maintain significant sovereignty over domestic and foreign policies. Kapucu and Hu (2020) emphasize that NG's focus on trust and reciprocity helps reduce the challenges associated with consensus-based governance, such as delays in decision-making and the risk of gridlock.

Keast (2022) identifies NG as a mechanism for bridging governance gaps, particularly in multilateral contexts characterized by resource disparities and institutional asymmetries. This corresponds with ASEAN's need to harmonize the diverse economic systems of its members. Agranoff and Kolpakov (2023) highlight NG's potential to promote innovative policy solutions through cross-sectoral collaboration, which is especially pertinent for ASEAN's sectoral communities. NG frameworks could support public-private partnerships in the AEC or enhance non-traditional security measures in the APSC. Provan and Kenis (2008) further indicate that the effectiveness of NG relies on its adaptability to dynamic environments. This flexibility makes it an ideal governance model for addressing ASEAN's evolving regional challenges, such as climate change, cybersecurity, and sustainable development.

NG's deliberative and participatory nature aligns with ASEAN's emphasis on dialogue and consultation. By incorporating diverse viewpoints, NG improves the legitimacy and effectiveness of ASEAN policies. However, Sørensen (2002) cautions that inclusivity necessitates careful management to prevent marginalizing less powerful stakeholders, notably smaller member states and CSOs. This highlights the importance of institutionalizing capacity-building initiatives to create a level playing field and ensure equitable participation in ASEAN's governance processes.

Ultimately, NG depends on the interaction and coordination of various states and NSAs to tackle regional challenges and achieve common goals. It emphasizes horizontal relationships, collaborative decision-making, and collective action (Araral et al., 2015). A more horizontal network, characterized by partnerships across multiple sectors and civic involvement, fosters dialogue and deliberation (Shigemasa, 2013). This approach ensures that the decision-making process remains dynamic while upholding structure and formality (Poocharoen and Sovacool, 2012). However, ASEAN faces challenges with this model, as highly autonomous member states act as gatekeepers of the decision-making process and the participation of NSAs. As such, NSAs must also grasp the Association's 'ASEAN Way,' which stresses consensus-building, non-interference, and informality to engage effectively with ASEAN member states. Recognizing the cultural, historical, and institutional context of ASEAN is essential for understanding its institutional design (Acharya, 2004) and enhancing NG's role in fostering regional collaboration.

## Network governance in the ASEAN community

In each ASEAN sectoral community, NSAs are critical in promoting regional integration and cooperation by fostering collaboration among various stakeholders. NSAs have been pivotal in supporting economic policies, advocating for trade liberalization, and highlighting tariff and non-tariff barriers within the AEC. Researchers such as Kapucu and Hu (2020) emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in driving economic integration. For instance, Sithanontay and Neo (2022) identify the ASW as a successful initiative for digitizing customs procedures, significantly reducing trade costs, and enhancing transparency in cross-border trade. These studies underscore the importance of PPPs and businesses' role in the efforts towards technical standardization through mutual recognition arrangements. It promotes seamless trade integration while addressing

disparities in regulatory and institutional capacities among member states.

Literature discussions also explore the challenges of balancing state sovereignty with collective action involving NSAs in economic integration. Acharya (2001) and Jetschke (2009) emphasize that ASEAN's preference for informal processes, consensus-building, and non-interference contributes to slow decision-making and implementation. However, Provan and Kenis (2008) identify trust and reciprocity as critical elements in NG, facilitating collaboration and reducing transaction costs among actors in a networked system. Conversely, Plummer (2006) stresses that AFTA's success hinges on harmonizing trade policies among ASEAN's diverse member states, addressing challenges related to institutional and economic differences. Nonetheless, his work primarily concentrates on the structural and economic aspects of regional integration rather than the direct role of NSAs.

In the APSC, Acharya (2014) emphasizes that the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) serves as a vital mechanism for fostering multilateral dialogue and building trust among member states and external partners, including think tanks that propose policy recommendations for collaboration. Caballero-Anthony (2014) similarly highlights the AMMTC's partnership with organizations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and CSOs at the national level, illustrating how non-governmental frameworks can mobilize expertise and collaborate with state actors to combat transnational crime. However, the selective and often consultative nature of NSA participation in ASEAN mechanisms such as the ARF and AMMTC has been criticized for limiting their effectiveness and influence in policy formulation. Scholars note that ASEAN's state-centric approach and emphasis on sovereignty often restrict deeper engagement with these actors (Caballero-Anthony, 2005; Gerard, 2014; Jetschke and Rüländ, 2009).

Similarly, the ASCC highlights the potential of NSAs in promoting inclusivity and social development. Scholars such as Poocharoen and Sovacool (2012) and Acharya (2014) have explored the roles of CSOs in fostering social cohesion, preserving culture, and advancing human rights. For example, initiatives like the ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive (ACHDA) have been essential in protecting the region's intangible cultural heritage and enhancing people-to-people connectivity. However, Gerard (2014) and Chandra (2017) contend that ASEAN's state-centric governance restricts the influence of NSAs in policy formulation, often confining them to consultative roles. This generates tension between the formal structures of ASEAN and the more participatory approaches advocated by NSAs.

## Role of actors in ASEAN network governance

State actors, including governments and their respective agencies, play a significant role in shaping regional policies and promoting collective action. They direct and encourage cooperation within and beyond ASEAN, which is crucial for deepening collaborative partnerships and fostering interactions that align with ASEAN's principles and norms. Their 'will and interest' are essential factors influencing the level of cooperation across the ASEAN Community. Their commitment to ASEAN principles and norms is vital for stimulating collaboration among member states. State actors bring

their 'national interests' into the policymaking process, and through negotiation and compromise, they strive to find common ground and achieve consensus (Kurus, 1995).

Consequently, the will and interests of state actors are vital for preserving the organization's integrity and promoting cooperation within the ASEAN Community. State actors also determine the extent to which ASEAN norms, such as non-interference, consensus-based decision-making, and respect for sovereignty, are integrated into the ASEAN policymaking processes (Severino, 2003). Through their commitment to these norms, state actors can foster trust and confidence among member states, creating an environment conducive to collaborative decision-making within the ASEAN Community. The degree to which state actors adhere to ASEAN norms by actively advocating for and defending them in their interactions with fellow member states and external partners will influence the level of cooperation and collaboration within the Association. Therefore, the role of state actors is critical for nurturing and sustaining collaboration with NSAs within ASEAN.

The role of NSAs is essential for enhancing the narrative of the non-governmental sector, as external actors operate under a paradigm distinct from that of ASEAN member states, providing perspectives that are a significant advantage. Nevertheless, NSAs' involvement in ASEAN has been limited and complicated for several reasons. Despite ASEAN's efforts to engage NSAs, formal mechanisms for their participation remain relatively restricted. Furthermore, confining such engagement to systems designed for interaction among state actors undermines the potential for active involvement, collaboration, and contributions from NSAs. Instead, the relationship between ASEAN and NSAs should be institutionalized and conducted regularly at the technical (e.g., working groups, task forces, etc.) and national (ASEAN national secretariats and other relevant national agencies) levels (Chandra et al., 2017) to create a more substantial impact on community building. Relying on *ad hoc* consultations, dialogues, or side events for NSAs and the lack of established and institutionalized channels can hinder their meaningful and sustained participation in the ASEAN processes.

NSAs may require financial resources, technical expertise, and support for human capacity, particularly from CSOs and smaller grassroots groups. This can pose challenges for them to engage actively in ASEAN processes, conduct research, and contribute effectively to policy discussions. Their access to and influence within ASEAN can differ based on their sector, resources, and networks. Larger corporations and well-established CSOs may have improved access and resources to engage with the Association. In contrast, smaller organizations and marginalized communities may encounter barriers to participation and have their voices heard.

ASEAN operates on the principles of non-interference and state sovereignty, which can limit the role of NSAs in decision-making processes. The emphasis on state-centric engagement prioritizes member states, causing NSAs to often function in more consultative or advisory roles rather than exercising direct influence over policy decisions. ASEAN consists of diverse member states, each with distinct political, economic, and social contexts. Furthermore, NSAs offer a range of perspectives, interests, and agendas. Coordinating and reconciling these differing viewpoints can be difficult, especially when conflicting priorities or interests emerge among various NSAs or between NSAs and member states (Guilbaud, 2020). Despite these limitations and challenges, ASEAN has recognized the importance of NSAs in regional governance. As a

result, efforts are being made to improve their participation through dialogue platforms, consultations, and policy briefings, especially following the post-ASEAN Charter era that began in 2008. However, further progress is needed to institutionalize and ensure a more meaningful and inclusive role for NSAs in ASEAN's NG processes.

## Discussion of key themes and debates in ASEAN network governance literature

The literature on NSAs in ASEAN highlights several key themes and debates. One central theme is the tension between state-centric governance and inclusive decision-making. While ASEAN's NSA approach seeks to involve multiple actors, the dominance of state actors can restrict engagement by external stakeholders. Although scholars advocate for enhancing the participation and influence of NSAs (Chandra, 2017), some reluctance persists, particularly within the APSC, as member states continue to view security and political issues as state matters. Furthermore, a recurring debate focuses on the effectiveness of NSAs in achieving tangible outcomes. Some scholars contend that the ASEAN Way, characterized by consensus-based decision-making and non-binding agreements, can result in slow progress and limited enforcement (Caballero-Anthony, 2022). However, others argue that the challenge lies in balancing flexibility and accountability within the NSA framework to ensure that collaborative efforts translate into concrete actions and measurable results (Provan and Kenis, 2008).

The literature highlights the importance of capacity-building efforts to improve the effectiveness of NSAs in ASEAN. This includes enhancing the government and NSAs' capabilities to engage meaningfully in NG processes. Capacity-building initiatives can strengthen institutions and processes, foster stakeholder trust, facilitate knowledge sharing, and enhance technical expertise. Scholars emphasize the need to invest in human capital, institutional frameworks, and information and communication technologies to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of NG in ASEAN (Poocharoen and Sovacool, 2012).

Balancing national interests with regional cooperation poses a significant challenge. As ASEAN includes diverse member states with varying levels of development, priorities, and political systems, reconciling national interests with collective action can be intricate. The literature underscores the need for mechanisms that encourage mutual understanding, dialogue, and compromise among member states and recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of regional issues (Emmers and Caballero-Anthony, 2006; Than, 2001). Another area of debate focuses on accountability and transparency in NG processes. Critics argue that the informal and non-binding nature of ASEAN's decision-making may limit transparency and hinder effective monitoring and evaluation. Amador (2009) emphasizes the necessity of strengthening accountability mechanisms, ensuring transparency in decision-making, and facilitating access to information to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of NG in ASEAN.

## Methodology

This research examined databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and ASEAN's official publications to

collect relevant literature. The primary search terms included "NG," "Non-State Actors," "ASEAN," "regional cooperation," and "sectoral communities." The study reviewed case studies related to NG in AEC, APSC, and ASCC. Each sectoral community's cases were analyzed to explore NG's application, outcomes, challenges, and opportunities. The analyses included qualitative assessments of policy documents, official statements, and scholarly works.

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of ASEAN's institutional design by examining the varying networked policy effectiveness (NPE) levels across its sectoral communities. NPE will serve as a framework for evaluating the performance and efficacy of governance systems grounded in NG principles. Within the ASEAN context, NPE will assess the extent to which the institutional framework facilitates collaboration, inclusivity, and the achievement of regional objectives through interconnected governance mechanisms. This evaluation is informed by observed performance, the effectiveness of policy implementation, and the historical track record of each community, highlighting strengths and opportunities for further development. While the term 'effective performance' can be contentious, this study defines it as satisfactory if a community or initiative meets its objectives. This perspective will be significant in the section detailing the performance of each sectoral community. Lastly, the paper underscores the importance of engaging with NSAs. It identifies those communities that demonstrate greater involvement from NSAs or external entities as essential in enhancing NPE.

## Case studies analysis and discussion

A comprehensive analysis of ASEAN's NG mechanisms and structures was conducted, emphasizing specific AEC, APSC, and ASCC examples. The effectiveness of these mechanisms in addressing regional challenges and the roles of both state and NSAs in ASEAN's NG were evaluated.

### ASEAN free trade area (AFTA)

Established to promote regional economic integration, AFTA provides a framework for negotiation, cooperation, and dispute resolution concerning trade issues. It aims to 'eliminate or reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers among member states' (ASEAN, 1992), thereby enhancing ASEAN's competitiveness in the global economy. AFTA operates as a 'political network,' where decision-making and policymaking involve political bargaining, and the 'network serves as modes of governing' (Reckhow and Lester, 2007).

One of AFTA's key achievements is its function as a 'stepping stone to broader liberalization and, in turn, to promote globalization' (Menon, 2018). Although intra-regional trade within AFTA has remained relatively low at 22–25% for nearly two decades, AFTA's framework has allowed member states to participate in external trade liberalization. This led to ASEAN negotiating multiple free trade agreements, culminating in the 2020 conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest free trade agreement. The provision of preferential tariff rates to non-members on a most-favored-nation (MFN) basis reflects this outward-oriented strategy, with more than 90% of tariff lines in ASEAN now having a zero-preference margin and over 70% of



intra-ASEAN trade conducted at zero MFN rates (Menon, 2018). As a result, ASEAN has connected to the global economy, utilizing AFTA as a mechanism to support its broader economic aspirations.

AFTA's success is bolstered by its inclusive approach and strong engagement of both state and NSAs. Various stakeholders, including government officials, business representatives, academia, and CSOs, actively participated throughout its development and implementation, ensuring that diverse perspectives were considered. The ASEAN economic ministers and senior economic officials coordinated these efforts, promoting collaboration and fostering a shared sense of ownership for the initiative. This inclusive framework exemplifies NG, enabling member states to engage in dialogue, coordinate policies, and collaboratively address trade challenges, thus enhancing the policymaking process (Reckhow and Lester, 2007).

Consensus-based decision-making has been a pillar of AFTA's success. Member states collectively determine the direction and pace of regional integration, reflecting a shared commitment to the agreement's goals (Plummer, 2006). This commitment has driven domestic reforms and adjustments, allowing member states to align their policies with AFTA's objectives. Moreover, AFTA's institutional framework, including the ASEAN Secretariat, the Committee on Trade in Goods, and its sub-committees, provides essential infrastructure for monitoring and enforcing compliance. These institutions promote transparency, accountability, and the timely resolution of trade issues (Plummer, 2006), reinforcing AFTA's credibility and effectiveness as an NG mechanism.

AFTA has been pivotal in promoting intra-regional trade and investment, improving market access, and stimulating regional economic growth (Pangetsu, 2009). AFTA encourages a collective commitment to economic liberalization and market openness by offering a platform for dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration. Its mechanisms establish uniform rules, commitments, and frameworks for dispute resolution, facilitating member states' integration efforts (ASEAN, n.d.-b). Consequently, AFTA propels regional trade and bolsters ASEAN's position as a unified economic bloc in the global arena. Through its inclusive governance model, institutional support, and a shared commitment among member states, AFTA showcases NG's potential for achieving sustainable economic integration. Its success emphasizes the significance of fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and institutional frameworks that support ASEAN's broader economic goals.

The evaluation of AFTA through the lens of NPE reveals a mixed performance characterized by significant achievements and notable challenges. AFTA has excelled in aligning regional goals with national policies, particularly in reducing tariffs and, to an extent, non-tariff barriers to promote economic liberalization. Its institutional frameworks, such as the Committee on Trade in Goods, have facilitated collaboration and ensured compliance. AFTA's ability to pave the way for external trade agreements like the RCEP underscores its effectiveness in advancing ASEAN's global economic aspirations. The extensive elimination of tariff barriers, with over 90% of tariff lines at a zero-preference margin (Menon, 2018), highlights its success in creating an outward-oriented trade network that connects ASEAN to the global economy. These achievements reflect a strong track record in fostering external economic engagement and elevating ASEAN's standing in international trade.

However, AFTA's effectiveness in fostering intra-regional trade remains a work in progress. Despite its framework, intra-regional

trade levels have stagnated at 22–25% over two decades, indicating limited progress in deepening economic interdependence among member states. Persistent non-tariff barriers (NTBs), such as regulatory discrepancies and uneven implementation of commitments, hinder the full realization of AFTA's objectives. Moreover, disparities in economic development among member states exacerbate unequal participation and benefits, with less-developed economies struggling to leverage AFTA's mechanisms fully. These challenges highlight the need for stronger regulatory harmonization, capacity-building initiatives, and targeted support for less-advantaged member states. By addressing these gaps and enhancing institutional mechanisms, AFTA can better fulfill its potential as a driver of regional economic integration and serve as a model of effective networked governance in ASEAN.

## ASEAN single window (ASW)

Launched in 2012, the ASW is an electronic platform created to facilitate the seamless exchange of trade-related documents and information among member states, thereby enhancing trade facilitation and efficiency (ASEAN, n.d.-i). It has increased trade volume among ASEAN member states by expediting cargo clearance processes, reducing business costs and time, and improving trade efficiency and competitiveness through electronic document sharing. By standardizing, digitizing, and transmitting customs documentation for cargo clearance, the ASW alleviates the need for businesses to manage large quantities of hardcopy documents and send them to various customs authorities in ASEAN. Since its full implementation in 2018, the ASW has significantly reduced the cost of trade between ASEAN countries, reflecting the region's strong collaboration among customs authorities.

The success of the ASW as a NG mechanism can be attributed to several key factors. First, it exemplifies the role of NG in promoting regional economic integration and enhancing trade facilitation. By offering a single electronic gateway for customs-related processes and documentation, the ASW has reduced administrative burdens, improved transparency, and expedited the clearance of goods at borders (Sithanonxay and Neo, 2022). These efficiencies directly support ASEAN's broader goals of economic integration and competitiveness.

Second, member states' inclusivity and active engagement have been vital to the ASW's success. The commitment of member states to comply with the ASW's requirements and collaborate on its development and operation has been crucial. The involvement of customs authorities from all member states highlights a strong commitment and cooperation from government agencies, which has played a significant role in harmonizing and standardizing trade-related procedures and documents. This alignment has enabled the implementation of common technical standards and protocols, facilitating interoperability among national customs systems and the seamless exchange of trade data and documents (ASEAN, 2005).

The ASW's robust institutional mechanisms have strengthened its implementation and ongoing operation. Supervised by the ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee (ASWSC) and supported by national coordinating committees in each ASEAN member state, the ASW benefits from a comprehensive governance framework that ensures coordination, technical assistance, and effective functioning



(ASEAN, 2005). These institutional arrangements have been crucial in maintaining the ASW's reliability and sustainability as a trade facilitation mechanism.

The involvement of NSAs within the AEC, including AFTA and ASW, has further strengthened NG processes. The ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN BAC), recognized as the "apex private sector body of ASEAN" (ASEAN-BAC, n.d.), plays a crucial role in advancing the AEC's objectives. Since 2020, under Vietnam's leadership, ASEAN BAC has championed the "Digital ASEAN for Sustainable Development" theme. This initiative advocates for the private business community, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to encourage innovation, creativity, and sustainable development. ASEAN BAC's efforts illustrate how NG mechanisms in the AEC engage the private sector and other organizations, promoting a multi-stakeholder approach that enhances regional economic integration.

While examples such as the ASW and ASEAN BAC illustrate the success of NG mechanisms within the AEC, challenges remain. Discrepancies in regulatory frameworks, technical capacity, and institutional arrangements among member states can hinder the effective implementation of regional initiatives (Basu-Das, 2017). Moreover, addressing non-tariff barriers and promoting deeper integration in services, investment, and intellectual property rights necessitate ongoing coordination and harmonization (ASEAN, 2015). Despite these challenges, the success of mechanisms like the ASW underscores the potential of NG in fostering collaboration, enhancing efficiency, and advancing ASEAN's economic integration.

From the NPE perspective, the ASW represents a high-performing NG mechanism in ASEAN, characterized by tangible outcomes, operational efficiency, and alignment with regional goals. Its effectiveness in unifying and standardizing customs procedures across diverse member states demonstrates its ability to address structural disparities and foster regional cohesion. By simplifying trade processes and reducing costs, the ASW has achieved its core objectives, reflecting robust performance within the NPE framework.

Nevertheless, persistent challenges affect its overall evaluation. Regulatory variations and differing technical capabilities among member states highlight the inconsistent application of ASW policies. These disparities underscore the need for enhanced capacity-building initiatives to ensure equitable benefits across all member states. While the ASW has successfully integrated customs systems, its potential to address broader non-tariff barriers (NTBs) remains underutilized. Expanding its focus to tackle these issues could significantly enhance its efficiency and contribution to ASEAN's broader economic goals.

## ASEAN regional forum (ARF)

The primary goal of the APSC is to promote regional peace, stability, and security by enhancing cooperation and coordination among member states (ASEAN, n.d.-c). The APSC's governance includes participation from state and NSAs, such as government agencies and CSOs. A notable example of non-governmental involvement within the APSC is the ARF, a platform for dialogue and consultation regarding political and security issues in the region (ASEAN, 1994). The ARF gathers ASEAN member states and ASEAN's dialogue partners to address regional security challenges, exchange views, and explore collaborative strategies. Member states

engage in multilateral discussions through the ARF, build trust, and advance conflict prevention and resolution efforts (Simon Sheldon, 2009).

A positive aspect of the NG within the ARF is its inclusive nature, allowing various states and, in some areas, NSAs to participate in discussions and policymaking processes (Simon Sheldon, 2009). Policy and research contributions to the ARF come from the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEP), as well as networks like the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) (Chalermpananupap, 2018). NSAs such as ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP engage in Track Two activities focusing on confidence-building and conflict resolution among states while supporting the ARF's current priorities (Feng, 2018; Chanto, 2003). This inclusivity enhances cooperation by ensuring that diverse perspectives and interests are considered, thus increasing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the forum and fostering a sense of community among participants (ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 2013).

Moreover, the ARF's NG structure enables flexible responses to emerging security challenges, fostering timely and adaptive decision-making (Rüland and Jetschke, 2008). This flexibility proves especially valuable in addressing dynamic security concerns where traditional hierarchical approaches may be less effective. By promoting information-sharing and confidence-building measures, NG within the ARF has enhanced transparency and trust among member states, contributing to regional stability and cooperation. For instance, the ARF has backed initiatives to counter violent extremism that facilitates terrorism (VECT), involving local communities and NSAs to develop strategies for addressing these threats (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2021). Besides, deliberate efforts to foster trust and mutual respect among diverse stakeholders enable networks to achieve goals that would be unattainable individually (Huxham and Vangen, 2013). This perspective aligns with the ARF's attempts to balance inclusivity with effectiveness in fostering regional security cooperation.

Despite its successes, NG within the ARF faces challenges. One significant issue is the varying levels of commitment and participation among member states. While some states actively engage in the forum's discussions and initiatives, others may lack the willingness or the capacity to participate effectively. This uneven commitment can impede the ARF's ability to address critical security issues comprehensively. Moreover, the non-binding nature of the ARF limits the enforceability of agreements, which reduces accountability and hinders the implementation of agreed-upon measures (Caballero-Anthony, 2005).

Another challenge is the limited involvement of NSAs due to the sensitive nature of the issues handled by the ARF. Member states often view NSAs as outsiders to state-centric political and security matters, which can limit their participation. This exclusion can lead to a static and state-dominated decision-making process, as the primary decision-makers are the member states. As noted in the literature review, this dynamic can impede the adaptability and inclusiveness of non-governmental mechanisms.

A stronger commitment and participation from all member states should be encouraged to enhance NG's effectiveness within the ARF. Increasing the institutionalization of the ARF through more formal decision-making and implementation mechanisms could improve accountability and strengthen its outcomes (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). Furthermore, ongoing trust-building, improved

information-sharing, and enhanced dialogue among member states are essential for addressing the challenges posed by voluntary participation and non-binding commitments.

Examining the ARF from the NPE perspective highlights its ability to promote multilateral collaboration and strengthen regional stability. The ARF's inclusive framework facilitates cooperation among state and NSAs, including groups like the ASEAN-ISIS and the CSCAP, which provide essential policy insights and engage in Track Two activities. These initiatives bolster confidence-building and conflict resolution, establishing the ARF as a credible venue for tackling political-security issues. By maintaining a non-hierarchical structure, the forum's adaptability enables member states and dialogue partners to respond effectively to shifting regional security landscapes. This capacity to embrace diverse perspectives and foster dialogue emphasizes the ARF's significant role in promoting trust and cooperative security initiatives.

The ARF faces challenges that impair its overall NPE. Variations in the commitment and engagement of ARF participants result in inconsistent involvement, undermining the forum's ability to achieve cohesive outcomes. Moreover, reliance on voluntary cooperation arrangements dilutes accountability since decisions are non-binding, restricting their enforceability. Additionally, the sensitive nature of political-security topics leads to limited participation from NSAs in key discussions, which diminishes the inclusivity and flexibility of the ARF's governance structures. To enhance its NPE, the ARF should foster stronger commitment from member states, improve institutional mechanisms for decision-making and implementation, and seek to increase NSA participation wherever feasible. By tackling these challenges, the ARF can attain more impactful and sustainable results in advancing regional peace and security.

## ASEAN ministerial meeting on transnational crime (AMMTC)

The AMMTC promotes cooperation among member states to address transnational crimes, such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and cybercrime (ASEAN, n.d.-f). The AMMTC's dependence on NSAs and its implementation of a networked approach enhance information sharing, capacity building, joint operations, and collective strategies to combat transnational crime. These efforts have significantly bolstered regional security and cooperation in tackling emerging challenges (ASEAN, 2012).

The AMMTC recognizes that effectively tackling transnational crime requires a multi-stakeholder approach, leveraging various participants' diverse strengths and expertise. NSAs offer valuable insights, specialized knowledge, and innovative solutions that strengthen collective efforts to confront the complexities of transnational crime (ASEAN, 2012). CSOs, private sector entities, and academic institutions have increasingly collaborated with the AMMTC, providing their expertise and resources to support its initiatives (ASEAN, n.d.-f). The AMMTC adopted the Guiding Criteria and Modalities for Engaging External Parties in 2017 to formalize these partnerships. This framework outlines the criteria for consultations and informal meetings with external parties, including dialogue partners, sectoral dialogue partners, and development partners who can effectively enhance ASEAN's capacity to combat transnational crime in a timely manner (ASEAN, 2017a,b).

The AMMTC's partnerships with international organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), have significantly strengthened its efforts. These collaborations enhance law enforcement and promote information sharing regarding criminal activities. A notable example is the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN), established in 2005 with support from the UNODC and other international organizations. ASEAN-WEN's initiatives include the formation of national Wildlife Crime Task Forces in most member countries and the establishment of a Program Coordination Unit in Bangkok, Thailand. Training programs and inter-agency exchanges under ASEAN-WEN have improved the capabilities of law enforcement officers in combating wildlife crime, resulting in increased vigilance, cross-border cooperation, and significant successes, such as a 60% rise in enforcement actions in 2010 (USAID, n.d.). These initiatives led to 160 related arrests, 28 convictions, the recovery of illegal wildlife valued at over \$15.3 million, and the dismantling of four wildlife trafficking syndicates in Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam (USAID, n.d.; ASEAN, n.d.-j).

Likewise, the AMMTC's partnership with UNODC has addressed challenges like people smuggling and drug trafficking. UNODC has provided technical support, training, and capacity-building to reinforce law enforcement and criminal justice systems across member states. For example, in 2016, UNODC held a workshop attended by over 30 migrant smuggling analysts and data specialists from more than 15 Southeast Asian countries and beyond. The participants committed to improving reporting and information exchange on migrant smuggling via UNODC's Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct (UNODC, 2016). These efforts have enhanced ASEAN's ability to tackle migrant smuggling by fostering networking and sharing crucial information.

The involvement of NSAs in the AMMTC has fostered a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among stakeholders. Their contributions provide diverse perspectives, skills, and resources, enabling a more comprehensive and inclusive strategy for addressing transnational crime. By combining law enforcement with prevention, rehabilitation, and social integration efforts, the AMMTC employs a multifaceted approach to combat transnational crime (ASEAN, n.d.-f).

However, challenges persist in fully harnessing the potential of NSAs. These challenges include the limited recognition and formal inclusion of local NSAs in decision-making processes and insufficient institutional support and resources for their active participation. Moreover, the diverse nature and agendas of NSAs hinder coordination and coherence. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of NG in the AMMTC and ensuring that all stakeholders can contribute meaningfully to combating transnational crime.

The AMMTC showcases NPE through a multi-stakeholder approach and regional collaboration to combat transnational crimes. It successfully brings together states and NSAs, including CSOs, and international bodies like UNODC and INTERPOL, highlighting its inclusive governance model. This joint effort has strengthened law enforcement, fostered capacity-building, and improved information-sharing systems. Initiatives such as the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) illustrate the AMMTC's ability to mobilize resources and expertise, resulting in significant achievements,

including heightened enforcement actions, successful convictions, and the dismantling of criminal networks.

From an NPE standpoint, the AMMTC encounters substantial obstacles that diminish its effectiveness. The lack of formal involvement of local NSAs in policymaking and inadequate institutional backing limit the extent of NSA contributions. Additionally, the varied priorities and capacities of NSAs complicate effective coordination, which weakens the coherence of the network's initiatives. Differing institutional capacities among member states intensify these challenges, underscoring the necessity for improved technical and financial support to facilitate equitable participation. Tackling these issues is essential for the AMMTC to fully leverage the potential of NG and achieve lasting success in addressing transnational crime. Enhancing institutional frameworks, boosting NSA participation, and promoting consistent engagement from all member states would substantially improve the AMMTC's efficiency and overall NPE outcomes.

## ASEAN committee on culture and information (COCI)

The ASCC seeks to foster a people-centered ASEAN, emphasizing the preservation of cultural heritage among its various objectives (ASEAN, 2009). An example of NG within the ASCC is the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) and its numerous working groups. The COCI promotes cooperation and collaboration among member states to preserve cultural heritage, advance cultural industries, and exchange information and best practices related to culture and information. Through this platform, member states participate in dialogue, share their experiences, and create joint initiatives to enhance cultural diversity and understanding (ASEAN, n.d.-e).

The active involvement of NSAs in COCI initiatives illustrates the effectiveness of NSAs in achieving the ASCC's goals. At the national level, the Thai Heritage Conservation Trust (THCT) collaborates closely with COCI to protect and promote the country's rich cultural heritage (ASEAN, n.d.-e). THCT's contributions to COCI projects, such as preserving historic sites and promoting traditional arts, enhance Thailand's cultural development while fostering regional cultural integration. This collaboration highlights how NSA participation enriches efforts to preserve and celebrate cultural heritage.

At the ASEAN level, NSA engagement in COCI activities has led to successful collaborations and joint projects. A notable example is the ASEAN Film Awards, organized by COCI in partnership with regional film associations and production companies. This initiative recognizes and showcases outstanding films from ASEAN member states, fostering cultural exchange and a shared ASEAN identity (ASEAN, n.d.-g). The participation of filmmakers, actors, and film industry professionals highlights the role of NG in promoting cultural integration and cooperation throughout the region.

Another initiative backed by COCI is the ACHDA (ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive). This project, developed in collaboration with national cultural agencies, aims to digitize and preserve ASEAN's cultural artifacts, traditional knowledge, and intangible heritage (ASEAN, n.d.-g). By safeguarding and promoting ASEAN's shared cultural heritage, this initiative plays a crucial role in

maintaining ASEAN's identity and fostering mutual understanding among member states.

These initiatives demonstrate the tangible outcomes and contributions of NSAs within the COCI framework. Their active involvement, including NGOs and cultural organizations, in projects such as cultural preservation, film promotion, and heritage digitization illustrates the effectiveness of a networked approach to fostering regional cooperation and integration. Collaborative efforts through COCI enhance cultural ties and promote ASEAN's identity as a cohesive and inclusive community. Moreover, the success of these initiatives emphasizes the vital role of NSAs in attaining the broader goals of the ASCC related to cultural preservation, mutual understanding, and regional integration.

COCI demonstrates strong NPE through its ability to foster collaboration and achieve tangible results in cultural preservation and regional integration. COCI utilizes diverse expertise and resources to promote cultural heritage and mutual understanding among member states by engaging state and NSA participants. Initiatives such as the ACHDA and the ASEAN Film Awards underscore COCI's effectiveness in achieving its goals. The digitization of ASEAN's cultural artifacts preserves intangible heritage while cultivating a sense of shared identity, and the active participation of NSAs, including NGOs and cultural professionals, ensures inclusivity and enriches the policymaking process. These efforts emphasize the strength of COCI's NG framework in addressing regional cultural challenges and advancing ASEAN's socio-cultural objectives.

From an NPE viewpoint, COCI's performance could improve by tackling specific limitations. While NSAs significantly contribute, their involvement often hinges on available resources and institutional backing, which varies among member states. Moreover, the differing priorities of NSAs can obstruct collaborative efforts, affecting the consistency of COCI's programs. By reinforcing institutional mechanisms to integrate NSAs into decision-making better and ensuring steady support for these stakeholders across all member states, COCI could enhance inclusivity and effectiveness within its governance framework. Closing these gaps would enable COCI to fulfill better its role in promoting cultural preservation and socio-cultural integration within ASEAN.

## ASEAN committee on disaster management (ACDM)

The ACDM was established to enhance regional cooperation in disaster management and emergency response (ASEAN, n.d.-h). The ACDM functions under the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) framework, which provides a comprehensive regional strategy for disaster risk reduction and response (ASEAN, n.d.-g). One notable example of effective collaboration is the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), which plays a crucial role in coordinating regional disaster response efforts (AHA Centre, n.d.-a). The AHA Centre is the primary coordinating body, facilitating information exchange, mobilizing resources, and coordinating response activities during disasters in the ASEAN region (AHA Centre, n.d.-a).

Alongside state actors, NSAs have contributed to ASEAN's disaster management network. For instance, the Asian Partnership for the



Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRA) has been actively involved in disaster management initiatives within ASEAN through various projects and collaborations. One example is their partnership with the ACDM to implement community-based disaster risk management activities designed to enhance the disaster management capacities of rural communities in ASEAN member countries. Another instance of their involvement in disaster management is their collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and other regional organizations to operationalize the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT). The ERAT is a rapid deployment mechanism that offers technical support and expertise for disaster response and assessment during emergencies (AHA Centre, n.d.-b). They have shared their knowledge in community-based disaster risk reduction and participated in ERAT missions, providing on-the-ground support and helping to evaluate the needs and priorities in affected areas.

AsiaDHRRA also actively participates in ASEAN platforms and initiatives aimed at rural development and disaster management, such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE) and related gatherings. It contributes to policies and strategies that address rural development challenges in the region. By understanding ASEAN's interests and institutional processes and fostering trust among its member states, AsiaDHRRA has effectively engaged as a non-state actor in regional collaboration on disaster management, rural development, and poverty eradication.

The ACDM showcases NPE through its strong framework and collaboration among various stakeholders in disaster risk reduction and response efforts. Under the AADMER, the ACDM facilitates cooperation between state actors and NSAs to improve regional disaster preparedness and response. A significant part of this initiative is the AHA Centre, which is pivotal in coordinating disaster response efforts and enabling information sharing and resource mobilization during emergencies. Programs like the ERAT, bolstered by contributions from NSAs, highlight the ACDM's ability to provide quick technical support and expertise, ensuring a prompt disaster response. These coordinated actions demonstrate high operational efficiency and alignment with ASEAN's goals for enhancing regional disaster resilience.

Despite its successes, the ACDM encounters challenges that hinder its overall NPE. Differences in institutional capacities and resource availability among member states lead to unequal effectiveness in disaster management efforts. Furthermore, even though NSAs like AsiaDHRRA have made notable contributions to community-based disaster risk management, their engagement often hinges on the degree of institutional support and access to ASEAN platforms. To bridge these gaps, it is essential to enhance the integration of NSAs into formal decision-making processes and ensure consistent capacity-building support across all member states. Strengthening these areas will enable the ACDM to enhance its networked governance further, facilitating equitable participation and improving disaster management outcomes throughout the ASEAN region.

## Summary of findings

This study highlights NG's pivotal role as a strategic framework within ASEAN, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders to tackle regional challenges. By examining the AEC, APSC, and ASCC, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of NG's ability to navigate the complexities of regional governance. Each community

offers insights into its successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, especially when assessed through the lens of NPE.

The AEC illustrates NG's potential to enhance economic integration and facilitate trade. Initiatives like AFTA and ASW showcase NG's ability to include both state and non-state actors within collaborative frameworks. AFTA's achievements in lowering tariff barriers and promoting economic cooperation highlight NG's role in aligning stakeholder interests and fostering legitimacy. At the same time, the ASW's digitization of customs procedures has boosted trade efficiency, harmonized regional processes, and reduced operational costs. However, the NPE evaluation points out important gaps, such as inconsistencies in regulatory frameworks and limited harmonization of policies regarding services, intellectual property rights, and investments. These challenges underscore the need for stronger institutional mechanisms to standardize implementation across member states, ensuring that NG initiatives lead to deeper and more sustainable economic integration.

In the APSC, NG's adaptability and inclusivity are evident in initiatives like the ARF and AMMTC. The ARF's multilateral approach fosters dialogue, builds trust, and encourages cooperative responses to security issues, showcasing NG's flexibility in navigating ASEAN's political diversity. However, its reliance on voluntary participation and non-binding agreements limits accountability and enforcement, revealing a significant structural weakness in ASEAN's informal governance framework. Similarly, the AMMTC highlights NG's strength in addressing transnational crime through partnerships with organizations such as the UNODC. Initiatives like ASEAN-WEN demonstrate measurable successes, including increased enforcement actions and the dismantling of criminal networks. Yet, the lack of formal integration of NSAs into policymaking processes and the varying levels of member state engagement hinder its broader effectiveness, as noted in the NPE analysis. Institutional reforms are necessary to enhance accountability, standardize roles, and promote ongoing collaboration to overcome these challenges.

The ASCC makes a compelling argument for NG's contributions to cultural preservation and disaster management. NG has successfully fostered regional identity and resilience through initiatives led by the COCI and the AHA Centre. COCI's projects, including the ACHDA, showcase NG's capability to integrate diverse cultural narratives while promoting regional cohesion. Similarly, the AHA Centre's partnerships with NSAs and programs like the ERAT emphasize the significance of community-driven strategies in disaster response. However, challenges such as uneven institutional capacity, limited NSA participation, and inconsistent resource allocation among member states impede the inclusivity and sustainability of these efforts. Addressing these gaps through enhanced capacity-building and structured NSA roles in policymaking processes is essential for maximizing the ASCC's potential.

NG is a potent tool for promoting inclusivity, adaptability, and collaboration within ASEAN's three sectoral communities. The findings underscore how NG helps ASEAN manage its inherent diversity while advancing regional goals. However, the NPE assessment reveals critical vulnerabilities that need attention. To fully realize NG's potential, ASEAN must strengthen its institutional frameworks to enhance accountability, inclusivity, and sustainability. This requires investments in capacity building, the formal integration of NSAs into governance structures, and mechanisms for consistent monitoring, compliance, and enforcement. Table 1 summarizes the findings on the effectiveness, participation, and key characteristics of network governance mechanisms across ASEAN's three sectoral communities.

TABLE 1 Network governance in ASEAN sectoral communities.

Policy network	Sectoral community	State and non-state actors participation	Effectiveness	Networked policy effectiveness (NPE)
AFTA	AEC	High	High	AFTA demonstrates strong alignment between regional goals and national policies, particularly in reducing tariffs and promoting trade liberalization. NPE is enhanced by fostering inclusivity through public-private partnerships and periodic compliance reviews that ensure regional accountability.
ASW	AEC	High	High	ASW showcases high NPE by streamlining customs procedures and enhancing trade transparency. Its effectiveness lies in leveraging digital technology and fostering cross-border cooperation and business participation, though disparities in member states' technical capacities require ongoing capacity-building.
ARF	APSC	Moderate	Moderate	The ARF's NPE is moderate, as its success in fostering trust and dialogue is offset by the voluntary nature of participation and non-binding agreements. Enhanced institutionalization and greater NSA engagement in areas less sensitive such as non-traditional security issues could improve its ability to address transnational security challenges.
AMMTC	APSC	Moderate	Moderate	AMMTC's NPE is bolstered by partnerships with international organizations like UNODC and INTERPOL but hindered by inconsistent NSA participation and insufficient institutional capacity among member states to pursue cooperation. Improving NSA inclusion and formalizing cooperation mechanisms can strengthen its NPE.
COCI	ASCC	High	High	COCI achieves high NPE by effectively integrating NSAs in initiatives like cultural preservation and information exchange. Projects such as the ACHDA highlight how inclusivity and shared responsibility contribute to the ASCC's goals.
ACDM	ASCC	High	High	ACDM reflects high NPE through its coordinated disaster management mechanisms and engagement with NSAs such as AsiaDHRRA. Its success is driven by inclusive practices, community-driven strategies, and capacity-building programs that enhance regional resilience.

## Conclusion

NG has become a crucial mechanism for enhancing ASEAN cooperation and integration. Its application across the AEC, APSC, and ASCC highlights its capability to tackle economic, political-security, and socio-cultural challenges through collaborative and inclusive approaches. NG fits seamlessly within ASEAN's decentralized and diverse regional framework and is grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared decision-making principles. Evaluating NG through the lens of NPE reveals its effectiveness in promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration, improving policy coherence, and achieving tangible outcomes in initiatives such as trade facilitation, disaster management, and cultural preservation. These achievements underscore the significance of inclusivity, accountability, and capacity-building in advancing ASEAN's strategic goals.

However, challenges persist that hinder NG's full potential. Structural limitations, such as the absence of binding mechanisms, unequal participation among member states, and differences in institutional capacity, impede the consistent implementation of NG initiatives. Besides, ASEAN's diversity, while a strength, often leads to fragmented coordination and delays in decision-making. Addressing these challenges requires enhancing institutional frameworks, formalizing NSA roles within governance structures, and improving accountability and monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, achieving collaborative advantage demands intentional efforts to foster a shared understanding and overcome barriers to cooperation. ASEAN's NG structures must continue integrating these principles to bolster regional resilience and tackle complex challenges effectively. By leveraging NG's strengths and addressing these weaknesses, ASEAN can attain deeper integration, promote stability, and drive sustainable development. This will reinforce ASEAN's position as a resilient, cohesive, and

forward-looking regional organization, ensuring its relevance in an increasingly interconnected and dynamic global landscape.

## Author contributions

PS: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Funding

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## References

- Acharya, A. (2001). *Constructing a security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Acharya, A. (2004). How ideas spread: whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism. *Int. Organ.* 58, 239–275. doi: 10.1017/S0020818304582024
- Acharya, A. (2014). *Constructing a security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. 3rd Edn. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Agranoff, R., and Kolpakov, A. (2023). *The politics of collaborative public management: A primer*. 2nd Edn. New York, NY: Routledge.
- AHA Centre (n.d.-a). *About Us*. Available at: <https://ahacentre.org/about-us/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- AHA Centre. (n.d.-b). *ASEAN ERAT Guidelines*. Available at: <https://ahacentre.org/publication/asean-erat-guidelines/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- Amador, J. S. (2009). *Administration and ASEAN regionalism*, 1–17. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1492505>
- Amador, J. S. III (2021). ASEANFocus: Rethinking ASEAN. The continuing Erosion of ASEAN centrality. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, pp. 36, 2–4.
- Araral, E., Fritzen, S., and Howlett, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Routledge handbook of public policy (first published in paperback)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) (n.d.). *About ASEAN-BAC*. Available at: <https://asean-bac.org/about> (Accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (1992). *Agreement on the common effective preferential tariff scheme for the ASEAN free trade area*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean-declarations/declaration-on-the-aims-and-purposes-of-the-asean-free-trade-area-2/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (1994). *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia*. ASEAN secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/treaty-amity-cooperation-southeast-asia/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (2005). *Agreement to establish and implement the ASEAN single window*. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Agreement-to-Establish-and-Implement-the-ASEAN-Single-Window-ASW-Agreement-1.pdf> (Accessed July 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (2009). *ASEAN socio-cultural Community blueprint*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/5187-19.pdf> (Accessed July 5, 2024).
- ASEAN (2012). *ASEAN plan of action to combat transnational crime*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-to-Combat-Transnational-Crime.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2024).
- ASEAN (2015). *Protocol on the legal framework to implement the ASEAN single window*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Protocol-on-the-Legal-Framework-to-Implement-the-ASEAN-Single-Window-1.pdf> (accessed June 10, 2024).
- ASEAN (2017a). *Guiding criteria and modalities in engaging external parties for the ASEAN ministerial meeting on transnational crime*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Guiding-Criteria-in-Engaging-External-Parties-for-the-AMMTC-Adopted-ad-ref-by-AMMTC-on-15-August-2017.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (2017b). *ASEAN community Progress monitoring system report*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://www.aseanstats.org/publication/asean-community-progress-monitoring-system-2017/> (accessed September 15, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-a). *ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/book/asean-economic-community-blueprint-2025/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-b). *ASEAN free trade area (AFTA) towards a single ASEAN market*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/brosurAFTA.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-c). *ASEAN political-security community blueprint*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ASEAN-APSC-Blueprint-2025.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-d). *ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/book/asean-socio-cultural-community-blueprint-2025/> (accessed June 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-e). *ASEAN committee on culture and information (COCI)*. ASEAN secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/culture-and-information/major-sectoral-bodies-committees/> (accessed July 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-f). *ASEAN ministerial meeting on transnational crime (AMMTC)*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean-ministerial-meeting-on-transnational-crime-ammtc/> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-g). *ASEAN agreement on disaster management and emergency response (AADMER)*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/book/asean-agreement-on-disaster-management-and-emergency-response-aadmer-work-programme-2021-2025/> (accessed July 6, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-h). *Disaster management and humanitarian assistance*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/disaster-management-humanitarian-assistance/> (accessed August 4, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-i). *Symposium on ASEAN single window targets expanded trade for more inclusive growth*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/symposium-on-asean-single-window-targets-expanded-trade-for-more-inclusive-growth/> (accessed August 30, 2024).
- ASEAN (n.d.-j). *Press notice Laos to host ASEAN anti-wildlife crime task forces, Vientiane*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <https://asean.org/press-notice-laos-to-host-asean-anti-wildlife-crime-task-forces-vientiane/> (accessed September 10, 2024).
- ASEAN-BAC (n.d.). *ASEAN business advisory council*. ASEAN-BAC. Available at: <https://asean-bac.org/index.php/about-2/> (accessed October 12, 2024).
- ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (2013). *ASEAN regional forum at twenty promoting peace and security in the Asia Pacific – A commemorative publication for the 20th ARF*. China: World Affairs Press. Available at: <https://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/A-Commemorative-Publication-for-the-20th-ASEAN-Regional-Forum.pdf>
- Basu-Das, S. (2017). *Mind the gap: explaining implementation shortfalls in the ASEAN economic community*. ISEAS Economics Working Paper, p. 7. ISEAS.
- Berkofsky, A. (2005). *Comparing EU and Asian integration processes: is the EU a role model for Asia?* European Policy Centre (EPC). Available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10941/doc\\_10972\\_290\\_en.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10941/doc_10972_290_en.pdf) (accessed October 12, 2024).
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2005). *Regional security in Southeast Asia: beyond the ASEAN way*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) Publishing.
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2014). Understanding ASEAN's centrality: bases and prospects in an evolving regional architecture. *Pac. Rev.* 27, 563–584. doi: 10.1080/09512748.2014.924227
- Caballero-Anthony, M. (2022). The ASEAN way and the changing security environment: navigating challenges to informality and centrality. *Int. Polit.* doi: 10.1057/s41311-022-00400-0

## Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.



- Chalermpananupap, T. (1999). *ASEAN-10: meeting the challenges*. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean-10-meeting-the-challenges-by-termsak-chalermpananupap/> (accessed December 15, 2024).
- Chalermpananupap, T. (2018). The ASEAN regional forum: Genesis, development, and challenges. *ASEAN Matters. ASEAN Studies Centre*. Available at: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ASEANMattersIssue3.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2024).
- Chandra, A. C. (2017). Civil society in regional governance: the case of ASEAN. *Asian J. Polit. Sci.* 25, 1–21. doi: 10.1080/02185377.2017.1297247
- Chandra, A. C., Abdulrahim, R., and Almuttaqi, A. I. (2017). *Non-state Actors' engagement with ASEAN: current state of play and way forward*. The Habibie Center, volume 4, 221–246.
- Chanto, S. D. (2003). *The ASEAN regional forum – the emergence of 'Soft Security': improving the functionality of the ASEAN security regime*. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/singapur/04601/d+c2003-3-chanto.pdf> (accessed October 28, 2024).
- Colebatch, H. K. (2014). Making sense of governance. *Polic. Soc.* 33, 307–316. doi: 10.1016/j.polsoc.2014.10.001
- Elliott, L. (2012). ASEAN and environmental governance: strategies of regionalism in Southeast Asia. *Global Environ. Polit.* 12, 38–57. doi: 10.1162/GLEP\_a\_00122
- Emmers, R., and Caballero-Anthony, M. (2006). *Non-traditional security in Asia: dilemmas in securitization*. 1st Edn. London: Routledge.
- Feng, H. (2018). Track 2 diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific: lessons for the epistemic community. *Asia Policy* 13, 60–66. doi: 10.1353/asp.2018.0063
- Gerard, K. (2014). ASEAN and civil society activities in 'created spaces': the limits of liberty. *Pac. Rev.*, 27, 265–287. doi: 10.1080/09512748.2014.882395 (accessed January 3, 2025).
- Guilbaud, A. (2020). "Diplomacy by non-state actors" in *Global diplomacy. The Sciences Po Series in International Relations and Political Economy*. eds. T. Balzacq, F. Charillon and F. Ramel (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Howlett, M. (2002). Do networks matter? Linking policy network structure to policy outcomes: evidence from four Canadian policy sectors 1990–2000. *Can. J. Polit. Sci.* 35, 235–267. doi: 10.1017/S0008423902778232
- Huxham, C., and Vangen, S. (2013). *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Isett, K. R., Mergel, I. A., LeRoux, K., Mischen, P. A., and Rethemeyer, R. K. (2011). Networks in public administration scholarship: Understanding where we are and where we need to go. *J. Public Adm. Res. Theory* 21, i157–i173. doi: 10.1093/jopart/muq061
- Jetschke, A. (2009). Institutionalizing ASEAN: celebrating Europe through network governance. *Camb. Rev. Int. Aff.* 22, 407–426. doi: 10.1080/09557570903107688
- Jetschke, A., and Rüländ, J. (2009). Decoupling rhetoric and practice: the cultural limits of ASEAN cooperation. *Pac. Rev.* 22, 179–203. doi: 10.1080/09512740902815326
- Kapucu, N., and Hu, Q. (2020). *Network governance: concepts, theories, and applications*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Karim, M. F., and Heryanto, T. Q. (2022). Regional integration and business interest: understanding the role of the ASEAN business advisory council. *Asian J. Polit. Sci.* 30, 140–159. doi: 10.1080/02185377.2022.2112402
- Keast, R. (2022). "Network governance" in *Handbook on theories of governance*. eds. C. Ansell and J. Torfing (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing), 485–496.
- Koh, T. (2017). ASEAN and the EU: differences and challenges. *Straits Times*. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/asean-and-the-eu-differences-and-challenges> (accessed October 1, 2024).
- Kurus, B. (1995). The ASEAN triad: National Interest, consensus-seeking, and economic co-operation. *Contemp. Southeast Asia*, 16, 404–420. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798260> (accessed September 12, 2024).
- Madhur, S. (2019). ASEAN: a role model for institution-lite regionalism? LKI blog on international relations. Available at: <https://lki.lk/blog/asean-a-role-model-for-institution-lite-regionalism/> (accessed September 14, 2024).
- Menon, J. (2018). How should we measure ASEAN's success? East Asia Forum. Available at: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/04/10/how-should-we-measure-aseans-success/> (accessed October 3, 2024).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2021). Chairman's statement of the 28th ASEAN regional forum 6 august 2021 via videoconference. Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100220807.pdf> (accessed October 11, 2024).
- Nesadurai, H. (2009). ASEAN and regional governance after the cold war: from regional order to regional community? *Pac. Rev.* 22, 91–118. doi: 10.1080/09512740802651169
- Pangetsu, M. E. (2009). Competitiveness towards ASEAN economic community. *J. Indones. Econ. Bus.* 24, 22–32. doi: 10.22146/jieb.6330
- Plummer, M. G. (2006). The ASEAN economic community and the European experience. ADB working paper series on regional economic integration. Asian Development Bank, 1–17.
- Poocharoen, O., and Sovacool, B. K. (2012). Exploring the challenges of energy and resources network governance. *Energy Policy* 42, 409–418. doi: 10.1016/j.enpol.2011.12.005
- Provan, K. G., and Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: structure, management, and effectiveness. *J. Public Adm. Res. Theory* 18, 229–252. doi: 10.1093/jopart/mum015
- Reckhow, S., and Lester, T. W. (2007). Network governance and regional equity: shared agendas or problematic partners? Working Paper, No. 2007-10, University of California, Institute of Urban and Regional Development (IURD), 1–32.
- Rüländ, J., and Jetschke, A. (2008). 40 years of ASEAN: perspectives, performance and lessons for change. *Pac. Rev.* 21, 397–409. doi: 10.1080/09512740802294705
- Severino, R. C. (2003). Regional integration in Europe and in Asia. The future of ASEAN economic integration. *Asia Europe J.* 1, 475–479. doi: 10.1007/s10308-003-0058-4
- Shigemasa, K. (2013). Long process of trust building in Southeast Asia: ASEAN, civil society and human rights. In SEAHNR secretariat, Human Rights and Peace in Southeast Asia Series 2: Defying the impasse (pp. 89–113). Southeast Asian Human Rights Studies Network (SEAHNRN). Available at: <https://shapsea.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SEAHNRN-Series-2-Defying-the-Impasse.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2024).
- Simon Sheldon, W. (2009). "The ASEAN regional forum" in *The Routledge handbook of Asian security studies*. eds. S. Ganguly, A. Scobell and J. C. Liow. 1st ed (New York, NY: Routledge).
- Sithanonxay, S., & Neo, G. W. K. (2022). Assessing the benefits of the ASEAN+6 single window for ASEAN members. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Sørensen, E. (2002). Democratic theory and network governance. *Adm. Theory Prax.*, 24, pp. 693–720. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25611407> (accessed January 3, 2025).
- Than, M. (2001). *ASEAN beyond the regional crisis: challenges and initiatives*. Singapore, Institute of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS).
- UNDP (2006). *UNDP and civil society organizations: A toolkit for strengthening partnerships*. New York, NY: UNDP.
- UNODC. (2016). Annual summary monitoring report – regional Programme for Southeast Asia. Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/archive/documents/Publications/annual-report/Annual\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/archive/documents/Publications/annual-report/Annual_Report_2016.pdf) (accessed December 29, 2024).
- USAID. (n.d.). A global model for the fight on wildlife crime. Available at: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/success/files/s\\_asia\\_asean.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/success/files/s_asia_asean.pdf) (accessed October 24, 2024).
- Wollmann, H. (1989). Policy knowledge: epistemic communities. Government and governance. *Int. J. Policy Adm.* 2, 233–266. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0491.1989.tb00092.x