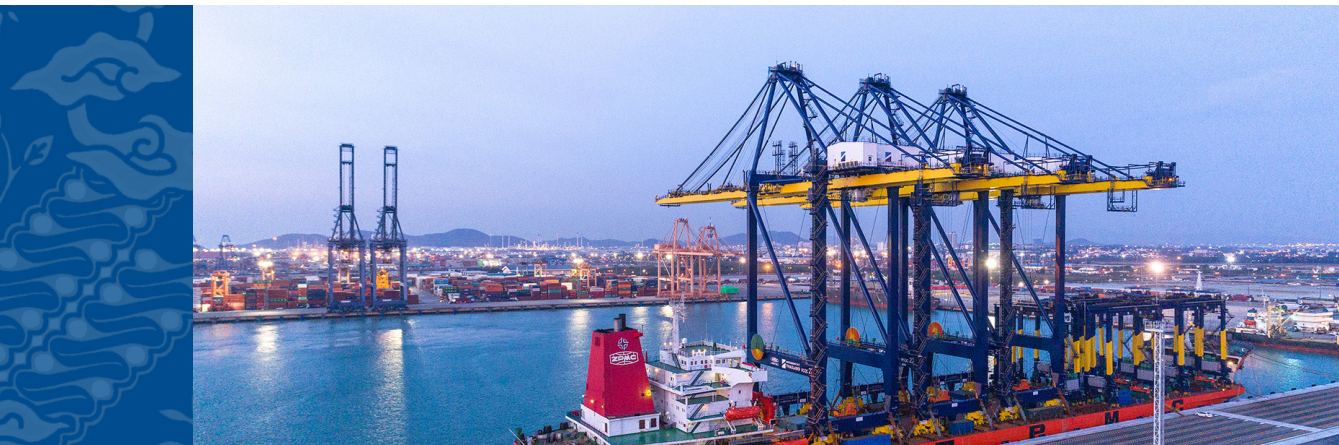


# ASEAN BRIEFS

Connecting Southeast Asia – Progress under the  
Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025



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# Executive Summary

- In 2010 the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan was launched and seen by many as a watershed moment for the regional organization which now recognized the need for regional infrastructure to enable closer economic and social linkages between its member states. Still, three years after the introduction of the plan, a certain sense of weariness has set in regarding the connectivity agenda, with progress remaining slow and expectations unmet.
- In response to such concerns, ASEAN has moved significantly closer to connectivity implementation, solidifying a number of concrete connectivity projects and making headway in other areas of the master plan. Particularly in the past year, the organization has introduced some long overdue governance innovations such as the introduction of a dedicated sectoral body to facilitate discussions on sustainable infrastructure. In addition, the strengthening of the Secretariat in Connectivity appears to be permanent, with a larger role for the regional public administration auguring a more centralized and possibly more coordinated approach to connectivity at the regional level.
- While some skepticism will surely remain until substantial implementation of initiatives is achieved, the progress on the initial priority project pipeline is promising. A number of external partners remain interested in supporting both physical infrastructure as well as the enabling policies that ASEAN is planning in the policy area.
- It remains to be seen whether ASEAN's mechanisms for external partner coordination will be sufficient to ensure resource mobilization and avoid the overlay of ASEAN's agenda with that of its partners.

*The ASEAN Studies Program would like to thank Lukas Maximilian Mueller (Visiting Fellow at The Habibie Center) for contributing this issue of ASEAN Briefs. For inquiries about this research please contact the writer directly at [lukas.maximilian.mueller@politik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:lukas.maximilian.mueller@politik.uni-freiburg.de)*



## Introduction

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The introduction of ASEAN's connectivity agenda through the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan in 2010 was seen by many as a watershed moment for the regional organization. It seemed that, following years of calls for increased investment, ASEAN had recognized the need for regional infrastructure to enable closer economic and social linkages between the member states. Southeast Asia has long been reliant on external investment for its infrastructure needs (Asian Development Bank, 2017), primarily from multilateral investment banks and bilateral development assistance. ASEAN's previous 2011 connectivity master plan was supposed to set an agenda to channel these investments into key projects, but was widely criticized for having a wish-list character, resulting in a lack of focus and execution (ASEAN External Partner, 2018b). In 2016, ASEAN released its new Master Plan on Connectivity 2025. This blueprint has been lauded for its firm footing in global connectivity trends and its more concrete and attainable objectives, particularly by some of ASEAN's external partners. It has moved the focus of ASEAN regional connectivity from the planning of specific infrastructure projects towards enabling policies, trying to address cross-sectoral issues relevant to regional connectivity.

In addition, ASEAN has, over time, introduced some institutional innovations aimed at supporting implementation of connectivity projects.

ASEAN's current quasi-definition as used by the current chairmanship encompasses a variety of features, including infrastructure, institutions, rules and regulations, or people-to-people linkages. The Connectivity Master Plan 2025 lists five priority areas, namely (1) sustainable infrastructure, (2) digital innovation, (3) seamless logistics, (4) regulatory excellence, and (5) people mobility (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016). All of these areas have their roots in existing ASEAN agendas, mainly within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Still, three years after the introduction of the plan, a certain sense of weariness has set in regarding the connectivity agenda, with progress remaining slow and expectations unmet. While the new MPAC was hailed as an “*agenda for implementation*,” it now looks increasingly like an “*agenda for drafting*” of additional activities of various ASEAN bodies, short of connectivity implementation in the member states (ASEAN External Partner, 2018b). This is in line with ASEAN's long-standing governance constraints, which frequently leave the organization unable to implement formulated objectives. Recently, however, the organization has moved significantly closer

to connectivity implementation, solidifying a number of concrete connectivity projects and making headway in other areas of the master plan.

## The Connectivity Master Plan – Status and Progress

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The Master Plan has to be seen in the relatively recent tradition of ASEAN strategic plans, which serve the dual purposes of setting an intra-ASEAN agenda as well as guiding external partner support. Following the early example of the Vientiane Action Plan, the key documents were the ASEAN Community Blueprints in the Political-Security, Economic and Socio-Cultural pillars of the organization, which emerged in tandem with the ASEAN Charter in 2008. Particularly the AEC Blueprint articulates a more substantial vision of regional cooperation, breaking with ASEAN traditions of informal, ad-hoc, dialogue-based cooperation. Officially, the Connectivity Master Plan aims to complement the three Blueprints. In practice, however, the plan has a strong focus on economic policies, represented by four of its five priority areas targeting economic connectivity.

When analyzing the Connectivity Master Plan, it is notable that the priorities mainly concern soft aspects of connectivity, such as logistics systems integration, trade facilitation, digitalization of SMEs as well as smart urbanization activities. This is in strong contrast to the first Connectivity Master Plan, which had an emphasis on mega-projects such as the ASEAN highway network, the Singapore-Kunming railway, and the ASEAN energy grid. While the two plans have significant differences, the current Master Plan does not completely move away from physical connectivity. To manage infrastructure projects, the Master Plan includes a so-called rolling priority

project pipeline which is slated to assess infrastructure projects by their trade benefit as well as sustainability criteria before seeking potential funding sources for the approved projects (ASEAN Official, 2019). While the Master Plan contains 15 initiatives overall, the priority pipeline (initiatives 1-3) remains the “*centerpiece*” (ASEAN Official, 2018), as this will be the mechanism through which ASEAN will attempt to steer the implementation of connectivity across the region. The remaining initiatives may still lead to substantial outcomes, but at this moment, all remain in the formulation stage. Two years after the master plan launch, ASEAN had received partner commitments for eight of the fifteen initiatives from four different dialogue partners (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018c), suggesting broad acceptance. The initiative for which no partner commitments have been made (seamless logistics and regulatory excellence) already receive support under the AEC.

What is the overall meaning of the Connectivity Master Plan? I contend that the document has to be seen not just as an attempt by ASEAN to set a regional cooperation agenda for its member states, but also for its dialogue partners. To sustain ASEAN centrality in a field as crowded and competitive as connectivity, ASEAN needs to assert its regional priorities with the aim of projecting a solidified agenda. From this vantage point, the connectivity master plan takes on a different purpose than simply providing a cooperation agenda. Instead, it seeks to set the agenda for ASEAN’s external environment to prevent the overlaying of external partner connectivity visions in the Southeast Asian region. Within ASEAN, the connectivity master plan should be seen as a document aimed at consolidating a progressive regional vision, which aims to ensure coherence between ASEAN member states and attaining

common objectives. Outside of ASEAN, the master plan is a tool to strengthen the centrality of ASEAN, facilitate the mobilization of external resources and set the agenda within ASEAN's organizational environment.

## Progress of the Master Plan Within ASEAN

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What progress has ASEAN made in implementing the contents of the Connectivity Master Plan? So far, substantial progress has been modest, leading some observers to conclude that the master plan works for like an “agenda for drafting” rather than an “agenda for implementation” (ASEAN External Partner, 2018b). Nonetheless, ASEAN has introduced some governance innovations, aiming to improve coordination on connectivity within the organization. Since the first connectivity master plan, the key regional body tasked with formulation and decision-making has been the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC). This committee consists of the diplomatic representations of the ASEAN member states in Jakarta, which also makes up the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), a body that is gaining importance in ASEAN decision-making. The CPR consists of officials from the member states' foreign ministries and underpins all ASEAN decision-making processes involving external partners. The role of the foreign ministries has been interpreted in various ways, with CPR representatives suggesting that they may act as “quick transmitters” (ASEAN Member State Official, 2019a) to prioritize key regional connectivity initiatives, while others have suggested that the foreign ministries are in a better position to coordinate across various national sectoral ministries and agencies (ASEAN Member State Official, 2019b). The question remains, however, to

which degree the CPR is truly competent to make choices on meaningful regional priorities and to substantially drive implementation at the national level. The key role of the CPR is the first constraint of ASEAN's connectivity governance, tying the policy area to foreign affairs rather than national processes of infrastructure planning.

The use of the CPR is also problematic because ASEAN typically sees its decision made through its numerous sectoral bodies in the three pillars. The sectoral bodies, which numbered 170 in 2007, the last time a comprehensive count was done (ASEAN Secretariat, 2007) are groups of government experts, which meet to agree on common activities in their policy areas. These bodies are at the forefront of ASEAN decision-making and are the key actors tasked with addressing the objectives of ASEAN strategic plans. Their accountability is to their national executives and they are in charge of their own activities. External partners with extensive institutional experience suggest that “*without an appropriate sectoral body, nothing gets done*” (ASEAN External Partner, 2018a). Following the adoption of the first and the second connectivity master plans, no new sectoral bodies were initially created to address the connectivity agenda. Instead, the connectivity agenda was expected to diffuse by way of the existing sectoral bodies under the three pillars (ASEAN External Partner, 2018b). There is scant evidence that the connectivity agenda has been taken up by these bodies as a priority. An analysis of all public work plans of the sectoral bodies under the ASEAN Economic Community found only 10 mentions of connectivity-related activities taken up by the sectoral bodies (Müller, 2018). This lack of diffusion of the connectivity agenda is the second constraint of ASEAN's connectivity governance, potentially clouding prospects of



implementation.

To remedy this issue of sectoral body ownership, ASEAN established a dedicated technical decision making body focused on connectivity in March 2018. The Lead Implementing Body for Sustainable Infrastructure (LIB-SI) was tasked with formulating a work plan on infrastructure and addressing potential challenges to connectivity implementation (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018b). The representatives that form LIB-SI are officials from the national ministries of planning, which take a big-picture view of national connectivity implementation. While the establishment of a dedicated sectoral body has to be seen as a positive development, interaction between LIB-SI and the ACCC remains underspecified and untested (ASEAN Official, 2019). Another key innovation of the connectivity agenda has been the creation of a connectivity division within the ASEAN Secretariat, which acts as a central node for project preparation and coordination of activities. The MPAC lays out the role of the secretariat as “*monitoring and assisting the implementation of the Master Plan*” (ASEAN

Secretariat, 2016). This vague phrasing, however, masks the unprecedented mandate given to the Secretariat to prepare projects, engage with partners and facilitate integration of the connectivity agenda throughout ASEAN’s innumerable sectoral bodies (Müller, 2018). The benefits of the Secretariat as a coordinating entity on connectivity is discussed in more detail below.

## **Progress of the Master Plan Within ASEAN’s External Environment**

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The objective of promoting ASEAN’s own proper connectivity vision within the larger East Asian region and beyond has been visible from the moment the connectivity agenda began to emerge. At the 15th ASEAN Summit in 2009, the Thai Prime Minister called for ASEAN connectivity “[...] *to be linked with a larger East Asian connectivity where ASEAN will be connected to the rest of the Asia-Pacific region, bringing about progress and prosperity to all.*” (Vejjajiva, 2009) Thailand continued to pursue its connectivity agenda beyond its chairmanship, calling for the connectivity

agenda to be addressed within the EAS in 2011. Most importantly, however, they called for a connectivity master plan “plus”, to pursue connectivity beyond ASEAN, including Northeast Asia, South Asia and other regions. This proposal was taken up verbatim by the 18th ASEAN Summit in Indonesia, where the suggestion of the master plan “plus” made it into the chair’s statement. This clearly illustrates the attempts to address ASEAN’s external environment, the community of dialogue partners.

The fact that ASEAN member states rely mainly on extra-regional sources to support their infrastructure development is owed to the lack of reliable regional funding mechanisms. In the Thai announcement of the connectivity concept at the 15th ASEAN Summit, they called for an establishment of an ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (Vejjajiva, 2009) which did come into being in 2011. The fund, mobilizing US\$ 300 Million from ASEAN member states and US\$ 150 Million co-funding by the Asian Development Bank, has only played a marginal role in connectivity investment so far. Being the largest fund established by ASEAN ever, the AIF may be called a modest success. But given the massive connectivity needs in the region, the fund falls well short, being dwarfed by the annual investment gap of US\$ 184 Billion (Asian Development Bank, 2017) by a factor of 409. Mobilization of external resources therefore remains a key feature of ASEAN’s MPAC. Funding will have to be sought through multilateral development banks, the private sector or bilateral development cooperation such as BRI and Japanese ODA or future EU or US funds. These sources of funding are similar to those that individual ASEAN members already have access to, calling into question the added value of a regional connectivity approval procedure. The success of the priority

project pipeline will therefore be measured on whether it can meaningfully support resource mobilization (ASEAN Official, 2019).

While external partner were critical of the first Connectivity Master Plan, its wish-list character and focus on mega projects, the current Master Plan has been received more positively. Still, it is important not to overstate the impact of the current connectivity blueprint. The current Connectivity Master Plan does not contain an outline of the future regional infrastructure, although the mega-projects from the first Master Plan remain on the agenda. For concrete infrastructure proposals, the rolling priority project pipeline is supposed to screen, assess, score and rank projects or inclusion in a priority list. The assessment takes into account cost of trade reduction, environmental and social impact, as well as feasibility (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018a). Following this assessment, ASEAN will seek to mobilize funds from a variety of external sources.

In 2018, the ASEAN member states submitted 42 proposals to the initial pipeline. It was expected that 10 projects would end of on the priority list for a funding assessment to be carried out (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018c). The priority project list released in June 2019, however, contained 19 projects in total (ASEAN Secretariat, 2019), divided into 6 A and 13 B-projects, for which ASEAN will seek to mobilize resources at a launch event in November 2019 (ASEAN External Partner, 2019b). The selected projects lean towards the CLMV countries (12/19 projects), mainland Southeast Asia (15/19 projects), and new connectivity projects over upgrades of existing linkages (11/19 projects). Some questions remain, however. People involved in the project pipeline did not know whether projects submitted by the member states previously,

either to the first MPAC or to any potential funding organizations (ASEAN Official, 2019). This suggests that the rolling priority pipeline may fall victim to the same issue of wish-list connectivity that the first master plan suffered from. From the 23 projects not included in the current priority list, only two were excluded completely, the remaining 19 may be included in the priority project pipeline in the future

(ASEAN External Partner, 2019b), prompting further questions of another wish-list situation. In addition, the concrete way of resource mobilization following project identification still remains unclear (ASEAN Official, 2019).

To manage external partners in connectivity and to achieve a modicum of ASEAN centrality, ASEAN has pursued various strategies

Project Name	Country	Sector	Type
Jalan Rasau, Kuala-Belait District Upgrading Roadwork from Single Lane to Dual Carriageways	Brunei Darussalam	Road	Brownfield
Siem Reap to Rattanakiri National Roads Upgrading	Cambodia	Road	Brownfield
Kuala Tanjung International Hub Port and Industrial Estates	Indonesia	Port	Greenfield
Expansion of Passenger Terminal Hang Nadim International Airport (Batam)	Indonesia	Airport	Brownfield
Development of Kijing Port	Indonesia	Port	Greenfield
Upgrading National Road No. 2W on the Asian Highway (AH13)	Lao PDR	Road	Brownfield
Upgrading National Road No. 8 on the Asian Highway (AH15)	Lao PDR	Road	Brownfield
Lao PDR-Viet Nam Power Transmission Line	Lao PDR	Power	Greenfield
Lao PDR-Myanmar Power Transmission Line (Lao PDR side)	Lao PDR	Power	Greenfield
Lao PDR-Myanmar Power Transmission Line (Myanmar side)	Myanmar	Power	Greenfield
Nay Pyi Taw-Kyaukphyu Expressway	Myanmar	Road	Greenfield
Muse-Tigyaing-Mandalay Expressway	Myanmar	Road	Greenfield
Yangon-Mandalay Expressway Improvement	Myanmar	Road	Brownfield
Tarlay-Phasho-Kyainglat Road Upgrading	Myanmar	Road	Brownfield
ASEAN Digital Hub	Thailand	ICT	Greenfield
Hat Yai-Sadao Motorway	Thailand	Road	Greenfield
Bangkok-Nong Khai HSR Development for Regional Connectivity	Thailand	Railway	Greenfield
Southern Coastal Corridor Project, Phase 2	Viet Nam	Road	Brownfield
HCMC-Moc Bai Expressway	Viet Nam	Road	Greenfield

List of ASEAN's initial priority pipeline projects  
(<https://asean.org/asean-identifies-potential-infrastructure-projects/>)

simultaneously. While ASEAN does conduct an annual Connectivity Symposium since 2010 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018c) this is mainly seen as a venue to share information between the dialogue partners, rather than negotiate projects and their complementarity (ASEAN External Partner, 2019a). Instead, ASEAN has pursued a different strategy following the adoption of the MPAC 2025. Soon after the publication of the 2016 Connectivity Master Plan, ASEAN held a series of so-called ACCC+1 meetings in order to extract financial commitments from ASEAN partners. The first of a series of such meetings was held with Chinese counterparts, then with representatives of Japan and the Republic of Korea (ASEAN External Partner, 2018b). This strategy differs notably from the one taken in trade and security, where ASEAN has pursued a strategy of inclusive institutional balancing, aimed at involving various partners in multilateral negotiations, de-conflicting between them and conducting hedging strategies of dominance-denial and binding engagement. The holding of +1 meetings rather represents a strategy of exclusive institutional balancing making it difficult for ASEAN to conduct hedging strategies with the various partners. The other tool that ASEAN possesses to manage its external partners are their Plans of Action. These plans, negotiated individually for a five-year period, contain priority areas for cooperation and remain ASEAN's method of choice for channeling institutional support by partner into the desired policy areas. But the plans are relatively crude tools to steer support, mentioning only areas of cooperation and not means of implementation. In addition, the PoAs only cover regional-level support, which is relevant to deliberation but is not relevant to implementation of national-level projects. A text analysis of the PoAs (Müller, 2018)

has highlighted that all dialogue partners have included connectivity as a priority. This suggests some willingness to attach to ASEAN's agenda. But the emergence of alternative plans by some partners such as Japan and China, and the pursuit of bilateral relations highlights that partners are not fully on board with ASEAN's vision and perpetuate their own. Ultimately, the PoAs are not governed strongly enough to ensure compliance by external partners. To summarize, ASEAN has introduced several substantial and institutional reforms with its new Connectivity Master Plan. Nonetheless, the way ASEAN plans to govern connectivity regionally has persistent constraints. Since ASEAN lacks internal centrality, it continues to find it difficult to carry out collective action and achieve its stated goals. In addition, the organization remains dependent on external resources. This challenges ASEAN centrality in its external environment. Partners that back up alternative connectivity visions with resources may gain an edge over ASEAN as an organization.

## **The Merits of a Strong Secretariat**

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Despite the remaining challenges, the case of connectivity clearly highlights some winning ASEAN strategies to support better regional policy-making. Beyond the value of a precise, forward-thinking regional agenda, one major benefit of the governance innovations related to connectivity include a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat division. While the driving force behind the connectivity agenda remains the ASEAN Connectivity Coordination Committee, the MPAC lays out the role of the secretariat as "*monitoring and assisting the implementation of the Master Plan*" (ASEAN Secretariat 2016c). This vague phrasing, however, masks the deeper impact that the



connectivity agenda may potentially have on ASEAN's institutional structure and the support it may lend to the secretariat as a key agent in the connectivity implementation process.

As a part of an organizational reform approved by the ASEAN Coordinating Council in 2008, the Connectivity Division was established as an entity reporting directly to the Secretary General in 2011. In 2014, it was suggested that connectivity be a part of a proposed Cross-Pillar Coordination Directorate, which was supposed to include both the Connectivity Division and the Narrowing the Development Gap Division, also known as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, which is now under the Economic Pillar. Given the positioning of the division beyond ASEAN's three-pillar structure, it is clear that connectivity is provided a more cross-sectoral view. To staff the connectivity division, experienced staff was recruited from ASEC divisions under the AEC. In addition, various external partners have provided support to the Connectivity Divisions, either by seconding staff or by supporting its activities.

The Connectivity Master Plan 2025 contains a much-expanded mandate for the responsible division, going beyond the tasks usually carried out by divisions within the ASEAN Secretariat. Its tasks include monitoring, problem-solving, outreach, and implementation support. For monitoring, the MPAC lists its tasks as *“Detailed monitoring of progress at 3 levels: input, output, and outcome; Tracking of changes in performance every 6 months; Report progress internally and externally (on website)”*. For problem solving, its tasks include *“Actively problem solve, resolve bottlenecks, and propose course corrections along the way; Facilitate work across organisational boundaries including between ministries and with key agents; Bring in external expertise as and when needed; Give ACCC representatives early warning of risks and recommended actions.”* For outreach, the division is tasked with *“Identifying list of priority events/forums for sharing Connectivity progress and approach; Proactive engagement with business groups and other groups (e.g. regular briefings), Supporting ACCC representatives in communicating progress to external*



*stakeholders and media; Regular updating of materials on website, including semi-annual results on implementation progress.” Finally, for implementation support, the division is supposed to “facilitate and coordinate the implementation of many of the Sustainable Infrastructure initiatives.” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016).*

This highlights that the Division runs the gamut from assisting member states in preparing project proposals and providing guidance on suitable approaches to connectivity, all the way through partner engagement, public relations and resource mobilization. ASEAN has clearly benefitted from the increased role of the Secretariat in connectivity. Member states have remarked positively on the activities of the division. Particularly external partners have lauded the Secretariat staff for their competence and transparency. Transparency is possibly the most notable feature of ASEC’s involvement in connectivity. The website outlining activities in connectivity is now a prominent feature of the ASEAN website and includes detailed information on

the status of the initiative, the methodological approach taken, as well as ongoing events. While the connectivity division is still relatively small, with a staff of five, this is a considerably higher capacity than the majority of AEC directorates.

Despite the strengthening of the Secretariat in connectivity, challenges remain in ASEAN’s coordination processes. While the Connectivity Division has good relations to the CPR, its relationship to other sectoral bodies appears to remain difficult. The introduction of LIB-SI, however, may make coordination easier by providing a dedicated body tasked with connectivity policy formulation and implementation. Something that must be called into question, however, are the cross-sectoral ambitions of the Connectivity Master Plan. While activities are supposed to encompass actors from various pillars, connectivity appears to mainly be interpreted as another policy area under the AEC. Interviewees have suggested that connectivity may have an impact on the cross-coordination of policy issues between

the ASEAN economic pillar and the political-security and socio-cultural pillars in the future, but the content and meaning of potential political or social connectivity concepts is not completely clear.

## Conclusion

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ASEAN has clearly come a long way in governing regional connectivity since the emergence of the first master plan in 2010. Particularly in the past year, the organization has introduced some long overdue governance innovations such as the introduction of a dedicated sectoral body to facilitate discussions on sustainable infrastructure. In addition, the strengthening of the Secretariat in Connectivity appears to be permanent, with a larger role for the regional public administration auguring a more centralized and possibly more coordinated approach to connectivity at the regional level. Particularly external partners have lauded ASEAN's progress on connectivity. While some skepticism will surely remain until substantial implementation of initiatives is achieved, the progress on the initial priority project pipeline is promising. A number of external partners remain interested in supporting both physical infrastructure as well as the enabling policies that ASEAN is planning in the policy area. Something that remains to be seen is whether ASEAN's mechanisms for external partner coordination will be sufficient to ensure resource mobilization and avoid the overlay of ASEAN's agenda with that of its partners. Current mechanisms, relying largely on +1 meetings and broad partnership documents may not be sufficient to ensure coverage of all issues and to avoid overlap between partner projects and commitments.





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The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights. The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

## About Talking ASEAN

Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.

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