Published as: Energy Strategy Reviews 25 (2019) 56–64

Prospect of China's Energy Investment in Southeast Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative: A Sense of Ownership Perspective

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Abstract

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has attracted the world's attention since it was proposed. This study focuses on the BRI in the energy sector in ASEAN. It examines the current status of China's investment into ASEAN's energy sector. It then discusses the problems of China's investment into the ASEAN energy sector with two cases in Myanmar. In addressing the problems and challenges, the study adopts a 'sense of ownership' framework to analyze how to improve the acceptability of the Chinese investment. It argues that the BRI priorities, including 'people-to-people bond', provide an opportunity to bring a sense of ownership to the community networking that is to be built as a key part of BRI and more profoundly, an opportunity to establish a good image and to make investment projects successful.

Key Words

Belt and Road Initiative; ASEAN; energy investment; sense of ownership

1 Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI hereafter), China's most ambitious global initiative during Xi Jinping's presidency, brings about opportunities as well as challenges to Southeast Asia. Through the Belt (the Silk Road Economic Belt) and the Road (the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road), the Chinese government has been trying to connect China to other parts of the world through a wide variety of connectivity. Southeast Asia is located on the critical point of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and it plays an important role in the BRI. While the BRI is expected to have many positive impacts, such as financing infrastructure construction and narrowing technical gap, it is also questioned for issues such as its possibility of damaging the environment of the countries alongside BRI (European Chamber of Commerce, 2016; Knowledge Wharton, 2017).

The Southeast Asian energy sector, with its abundant resources and huge demand of investment, has also brought about opportunities as well as challenges to the Chinese investment and thus offering lessons and experiences to explore the prospect of the BRI. With fast growth of economy, the Southeast

Asian countries are in bad need of infrastructure investment. The McKinsey Global Institute forecasts the need for over $2 trillion in infrastructure investment across ASEAN[1], including the sectors of transportation, energy, and telecommunications (US-ASEAN Business Council, 2017). China plays an influential role in energy investment in Southeast Asia from 2000 when China's overseas investment became active. Despite this good progress in the institutional level, China's investment in ASEAN, however, often incurs significant criticisms, e.g., the Myitsone Dam project[2] has been suspended since 2011 (Kristensen, 2016). The Chinese overseas investments play an important role in forging people's bound with China as well. For many people of countries alongside BRI, the Chinese overseas projects offered the only real channel to learn about China. A bad impression could create a poor image of China. Therefore, understanding the causes why such projects have not been supported would help both China and these countries to clarify misunderstanding, avoid negative impact and formulate proper policies to reap the potential mutual benefits from BRI.

While there is an increasing number of studies on the BRI, there is no discussion from the perspective of sense of ownership. The existing literature on the BRI can be broadly classified into two groups. The first group reviews motivation, framework, assessment and issues on the BRI (Brugier, 2014; Cheng, 2016; European Chamber of Commerce, 2016; Huang, 2016; Knowledge Wharton, 2017; Lee, Hu, Lee, Choi, & Shin, 2018; Shi & Yang, 2015; Zhang, Luo, Yang, & Li, 2018). The views are unsurprisingly mixed: while a large proportion of papers hold positive opinions, others concern their environmental and energy consequences (European Chamber of Commerce, 2016; Knowledge Wharton, 2017). The other group of studies are quantitative analyses of the expected impact of the BRI, such as its impact on Chinese overseas direct investment (Julan & Zhang, 2017). In the studies focusing on the field of energy and BRI, the topics relate to energy investment (Duan, Ji, Liu, & Fan, 2018), energy security (Brugier, 2014), clean energy (Abudureyimu & Han, 2014), energy cooperation (Shi & Yang, 2015), and convergence of energy efficiency (Han, et al., 2018). However, there is a lack of study in examining social issues with Chinese overseas investment under the BRI.

The BRI has the potential to further exaggerating the problems that have existed in China's investment in the ASEAN energy sector and thus needs to be studied. The BRI is expected to encourage more Chinese overseas activities, mainly investment activities. The public projects can be multiplied by the increasing activities of investment conducted by Chinese companies that are encouraged by the BRI. However, if these companies conduct business as usual, the business may not be sustainable as local protests can escalate and burst at some stage that will damage China's foreign relations. Therefore, the Chinese should learn from the experience of their overseas investment and make preparation for a successful implementation of the BRI.

[1] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising ten Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN is interchangeable with Southeast Asia.

[2] The Myitsone Dam project, developed jointly by the state Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power, the privately-owned Myanmar Asia World Company and the China Power Investment Corporation (CPI), was supposed to be the largest hydropower plant in Myanmar, yet it was halted in September 2011 as a result of significant criticisms over the dam's environmental impact and other negative impact on the local residents.

Adopting the concept 'sense of ownership', this study explores why some energy investment projects in ASEAN can be successful while other projects are controversial. Studying this issue is critical and timely under China's BRI, which has encouraged its enterprises, both state-owned and private, to make further investment in energy sector in almost all ASEAN countries. However, given the poor social acceptance of Chinese investment in ASEAN and public protests are delaying projects here and there in the region, further expansion of the Chinese investment in the ASEAN energy sector has raised skepticism in Southeast Asia. Against this context, 'sense of ownership' is important not only for the enterprises to establish 'good image' of itself, but also for the BRI to be successfully implemented.

This study suggests that, among the five cooperation priority areas, namely policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bond,[3] in the official document 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road',[4] 'people-to-people bond' should be the forerunner of BRI, even though it will not create immediate and tangible outcomes at the moment. However, it can create a friendly and enabling environment that minimizes challenges and difficulties for the BRI (investment) projects. The term 'people-to-people bond' first appeared in the Chinese official document 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road'. 'People-to-people bond' can also be a catalyst for energy investment in ASEAN through its facilitating role in contributing to the success of energy investment projects. Therefore, how to achieve 'people-to-people bond' would be a critical issue that must be addressed carefully, especially in light of the increasing investment activities under the BRI.

With this said, this paper makes the following contributions: it utilizes the concept 'sense of ownership' to analyze the success and failure of energy sector investment in ASEAN; it links the 'sense of ownership' to the 'people-to-people bond' and provides a theoretical foundation for the 'people-to-people bond' under the BRI; it also demonstrates a key element for the success of BRI; and it gives suggestions as to how to apply 'people-to-people bond' in the overseas investment to make BRI successful.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 reviews the methodology of 'sense of ownership' in natural resource development planning; section 3 discusses China's investment in ASEAN's energy sector and reviews two cases in the energy sector in Myanmar; section 4 applies the methodology in analyzing the two case studies; section 5 discuss ways to achieve sense of ownership and thus facilitate BRI; the last section concludes the paper with policy implications.

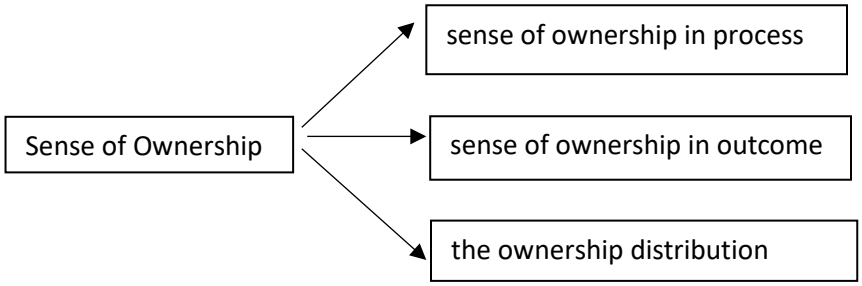
[3] The official document highlights that "[p]eople-to-people bond provides the public support for implementing the Initiative. We should carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation of the Silk Road by promoting extensive cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation……so as to win public support for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation". Here 'people-to-people bond' refers to bonding between the peoples of each nation and the people of China.
[4] The official document 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' was jointly issued by National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China in 2015 in Beijing.

2 Methodology

Described as an integral part to address problems and seek solutions (Gusfield 1989; Hajer 1995; Loseke 1999), the concept of 'sense of ownership' has been widely applied in the literature when natural resource planning and development is concerned. Adopting the 'sense of ownership' concept, Warren and McFadyen (2010) explores the influences of different development models on public attitudes towards a community-owned windfarm in southwest Scotland. The result is that public attitudes are more positive towards windfarm developments in areas where local communities have a direct involvement in them than in areas where they do not. The result supports the contention that a change of development model towards community ownership could have a positive effect on public attitudes towards windfarm developments in Scotland. Marks and Davis (2012) present a measure of 'sense of ownership' for piped water systems in 50 rural Kenyan villages. Their study establishes an empirical referent for households' 'sense of ownership' and finds that some types of participation enhance community members' 'sense of ownership' for rural water projects. Lachapelle (2008) uses 'sense of ownership' in the study and application of community development. In his research, 'sense of ownership' is described as a concept through which to assess whose voice is heard, who has influence over decisions, and who is affected by the process and outcome. The study presents a formal description and explanation of 'sense of ownership' as applied to community development, finding that enhanced public involvement in community planning and development efforts is of critical importance to the support, involvement or commitment of interested or affected parties to community development.

Being used to analyse the subject of natural resources projects, the 'sense of ownership' refers to "a shared sense of problem and process necessary to address the precarious world of wicked situations" (Lachapelle and McCool 2005, 283). Lachapelle and McCool (2005) have found that the 'sense of ownership' is a critical element in natural resource planning and development. They clarify the concept of 'sense of ownership' to include three essential characteristics and related questions. The first characteristic is the 'sense of ownership' in process. The second characteristic is the 'sense of ownership' in outcome. The third characteristic of 'sense of ownership' involves who is affected by the action and how the effects of a decision are distributed, accepted and owned spatially and temporally across diverse social, political and ecological scales. With an implicit reallocation and redistribution of power, citizens and agencies jointly define, share, and address a problem, which creates a 'sense of ownership'. In other words, when both citizens and agencies are engaged in the planning process of natural resource development, a 'sense of ownership' is created, which is a necessary factor to lead to smoother implementation of the project. Such engagement is also applicable to technical and bureaucratic processes since the engagement does not necessarily mean that the public will make technical decisions, but rather mean that they are informed. Figure 1 illustrates these three characteristics in a brief way.

Figure 1: Three characteristics of 'sense of ownership'



With this 'sense of ownership' framework, this study analyzes the success and failure of energy sector investment in ASEAN and to provide a theoretical foundation for the people-to-people bond under the BRI. Some other corporate social responsibility type approaches have also been used to analyze community acceptance of resource-mining such as the theory of 'mining community engagement' (ICMM, 2012; IFC, 2007; Reed, et al., 2009). However, it lacks the capacity to provide enough understanding into the community's expectations, concerns and level of acceptance to achieve a project's sustainability (Boateng, 2017; Gunningham, Kagan, & Thornton, 2004; IFC, 2007; Owen & Kemp, 2013; Wang, Awuah-Offei, Que, & Yang, 2016). Therefore, this study uses the framework of 'sense of ownership' to analyze such issues related with a community. The 'sense of ownership' theory gives a deep step-by-step understanding of those issues by specifying three characteristics of the concept.

3. China's investment in ASEAN's energy sector

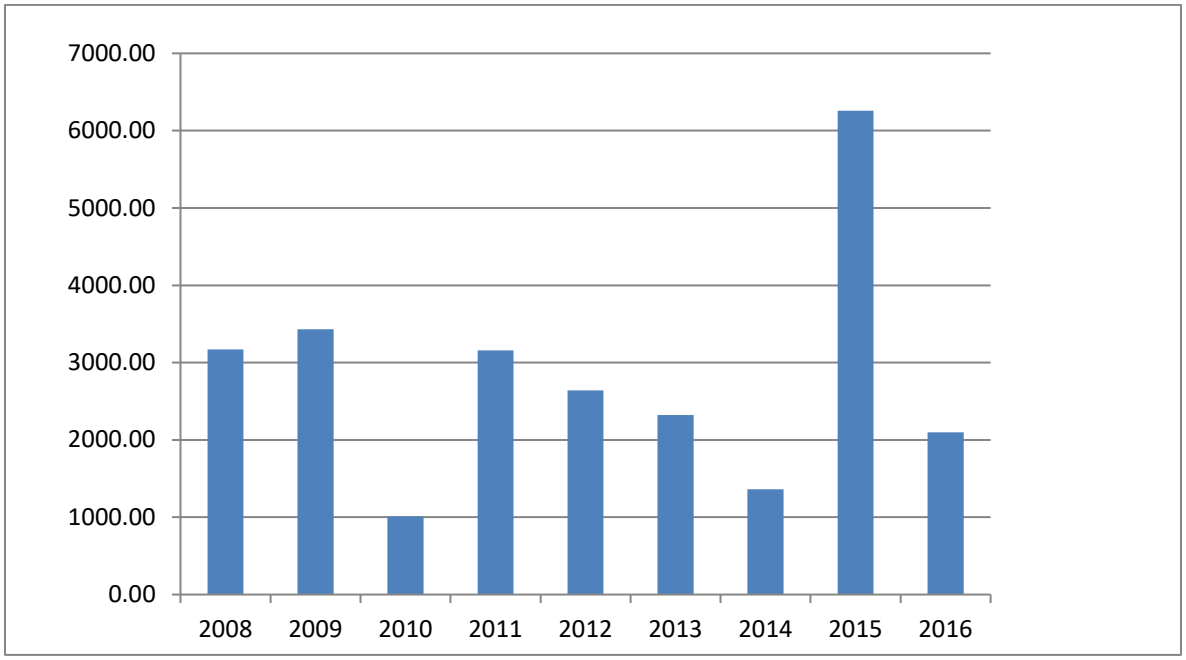
This section reviews the current status of Chinese investment in ASEAN's energy sector and discusses particularly two projects in the energy sector of Myanmar to identify the problems of such investment.

3.1 Current status of China's investment in ASEAN's energy sector

Since China started building market economy in the early 1990s, China's overseas direct investment in ASEAN has increased quickly. Particularly, some energy resource-rich ASEAN states have witnessed a rapid expansion of China's investment inflows since 2000s. During the past two decades, Chinese companies have invested heavily in ASEAN's energy sector, including oil and gas pipelines, power generation and transmission in countries such as Myanmar, Laos, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia. All these countries have seen an increase in Chinese investments in power plants construction and/or oil and gas exploration and development (Zhao, 2016). Even before the BRI was proposed, many Chinese companies had already been involved in various construction projects in Southeast Asia. Chinese investors invest in the majority of hydro power projects in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. These three countries have a very significant hydropower potential which is underdeveloped due to a lack of finance and market (Shi, 2016). China Three Gorges Corporation and China Huadian are quite active in building hydropower plants in the region. Between 2006 and 2011, China invested more than 6.1 billion US dollars in financing 2,729 MW of hydro capacity additions in the three countries (EIA, 2013). Chinese

companies also invest in power grids and thermal power plants in Cambodia and oil and gas pipelines in Myanmar. The energy sector of Indonesia and Singapore receive Chinese investment as well. In Indonesia, for example, many energy-related or other infrastructure projects started in 2012 and 2013. In the energy sector, particularly, Sinopec invested in an oil storage terminal in the Batam Free Trade Zone. China Power Investment and Anhui Conch Cement got involved with a hydropower project in North Kalimantan, Indonesia. Sinohydro, Gezhouba Group and China Power International invested in hydropower and thermal power projects (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015). Further, as Indonesia is a key supplier of coal and natural gas for China's energy-intensive coastal areas, several Chinese companies have maintained operations in coalmines in various parts of Indonesia. In Singapore, PetroChina and Huaneng Power International are involved in the construction of an oil terminal and operation of a power plant respectively. Figure 2 presents the foreign direct investment in ASEAN's energy sector during the past decade. The amount of Chinese investment in ASEAN's energy sector had already been huge before BRI. Even in 2009, the FDI in ASEAN's energy sector already went up to about $3,500 million. In 2015, after BRI was proposed, the investment hit the level of more than $6,000 million (Heritage Foundation, 2017). Most of the investment went to coal sector in Indonesia. An interesting point is that the investment declined sharply from more than $6,000 million in 2015 to only about $2,000 million in 2016. A major reason is that Chinese regulators began closely monitoring outbound coal investment. Banks are increasingly reluctant to fund coal-fired power plant projects as they now have a stricter standard for coal investment, including the overseas one.[5]

Figure 2: Foreign direct investment in ASEAN's energy sector (in million dollars) (2008-2016)



Source: Heritage Foundation; uploaded by Knoema

[5] Interview by the author at Fudan University, Shanghai in October 2017.

The following sub-sections use two projects in Myanmar to elaborate Chinese investment in energy sector in ASEAN and the problems Chinese investment faces.

3.2 Case study of two projects in Myanmar

Two high profile projects in Myanmar with different results highlight the challenges of Chinese investment into ASEAN's energy sector and possible solutions. One project is the oil and gas pipelines. Despite years of delays, the twin oil and gas pipelines run in parallel from Kyaukphyu, Maynmar to China's Southwestern Yunnan province, open in 2013 and 2017 respectively. The other is the Myitsone Dam project. Meant to be the largest hydropower project in Myanmar, the Myitsone Dam started amidst strong local opposition. Moving towards democracy, the Myanmar government finally ordered the suspension of the controversial project in 2011 (Tun, 2011).

The Myanmar's oil and gas pipelines project is relatively successful. In this case, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has built up a 'good image' for itself and its partners so that the pipeline projects are acceptable by the society. CNPC has tried to be immersed into the country and the society of Myanmar, making the people of Myanmar accepts them. A Myanmar local told a journalist that "they (CNPC and its partners) have paved road for our village. We have a very good and harmonious relationship. We are even together to celebrate New Year" (Wang & Zhang, 2014). Therefore, although the pipeline projects have encountered challenges such as criticisms of environmental damages and human rights violation, most of the local people still support the projects (Zhu, 2015). Further, in an MCPWC report, it is recorded that in townships where the pipelines go through and the farmers strongly demanded compensations for what they lost due to the pipeline construction, a tripartite group has been formed, including the representatives from the government, the company and the affected farmers (MCPWC, 2017). The compensation issue, hardly solvable though, has been solved with efforts to satisfy the local communities as much as possible. All these efforts to materialize 'sense of ownership' have made it difficult for the NGOs to mobilize the local communities to oppose the projects. Consequently, when some people planned to protest against the projects during the Songkran Festival, many villagers refused to participate in (Wang & Zhang, 2014).

In contrast, the Myitsone Dam project performed very badly in creating itself a 'good image'. Even when the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) was conducted, China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) had already begun to destroy its reputation. CPI had contracted ESIA to two institutions. One is the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA), which alleges that the Myitsone Dam project has a serious threat on the biological diversity, residents living and the ecology of downstream Irrawaddy River. It is stated that "there is no need for such a big dam to be constructed at the confluence of Ayeyarwady River[6]" (BANCA, 2009, p. 42). However, the other contractor for the ESIA, Changjiang Institute of Survey, Planning, Design and Research (CISPDR), declares that Myitsone Dam project has no restrictive influence on biodiversity, watershed ecosystem and dam safety and suggests building the Dam (CISPDR, 2010). The contradictory conclusions of the two reports provoked questions and protests of the Myanmar people on the Myitsone Dam project. Further, in 2013, the ESIA was

[6] Ayeyarwady River is also known as the Irrawaddy River.

reviewed by a panel of Myanmar and international experts (Zhang & Sun, 2016), which found the CISPDR's report "contains some serious deficiencies and flawed conclusions" with "superficial analysis of the dams' impacts on freshwater biodiversity" (International Rivers, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, it is not surprising that CPI has been regarded one of the "worst companies operating in Myanmar from a corporate social responsibility perspective" (Kirchherr, Charles, & Walton, 2017, p. 118).

3.3 Problems of Chinese investment in ASEAN's energy sector

The contrast of the two cases shows how important a company (project)'s good image is and the Chinese companies are still disadvantaged in creating their positive image. From the comparative analysis, we found that there are many problems with China's investment in ASEAN energy sector. The causes, however, are complicated. From the individual investor's perspective, the challenges could stem from inexperience on the part of Chinese investors who are new to international investment practices. Due to their lack of experience in dealing with inter-cultural differences, Chinese investors may have inappropriately applied their domestic practices to overseas contexts. For example, push of projects amid controversies will bring negative feedbacks but Chinese companies always suppose such push be acceptable in order to effectively move the project forward. Problems also take place when individual workers or companies lack self-discipline and thus cause damages to the group as a whole.

In addition, investors are weak in building a 'sense of ownership' within the local community. Chinese investors are good at dealing with governments but are poor, and even reluctant to deal with NGOs, who play a big role in building consensus. In the unsuccessful Myanmar cases, NGOs have been playing a major role in fighting with the Chinese investors. Another problem is that the Chinese investors do not know how to build long-term common interests with local community. They are good at providing once-off benefits, such as building schools and paving roads, but are often reluctant to employ local people. They are not capable in developing other joint efforts, such as capacity and business development for local communities, which are critical for the sustainable development of local communities with natural resources (Shi, 2005).

Technically, energy projects, such as hydropower projects, often have significant and complicated social and environmental impacts on the environment and local communities, and are controversial in nature. The fact that China is a key player at most of the energy projects in less developed ASEAN countries makes people believe that China may have pressured these host countries to comprise their social and environmental interests during the project development. Besides being a key player in many energy projects in ASEAN, China is also a major donor to the less developed countries in the region, which further makes China's investment behavior suspicious to the outsiders. The following section discusses in detail the application of 'sense of ownership' to Chinese investment in Myanmar's energy sector, elaborating the importance of this concept.

4. Application of the 'Sense of Ownership' to Energy Projects: Case Study of Two Chinese Projects in Myanmar

This section discusses the concept of 'sense of ownership' and elaborates that how the BRI provides a direction to achieve 'sense of ownership'. Adopting two cases of energy investment in Myanmar, it analyzes how 'sense of ownership' is important to a natural resource project. This section first briefly reviews the concept of 'sense of ownership'. It then applies the concept into Myanmar's energy sector to elaborate how 'sense of ownership' is important to an energy project. Lastly it summaries and highlights its importance.

4.1 Application of 'sense of ownership' to Chinese investment to in Myanmar's energy sector

This subsection elaborates the application and the importance of 'sense of ownership' by characteristics.

4.1.1 The first characteristic: 'sense of ownership' in process

Who has a voice and whose voice is heard is an integral factor of the 'sense of ownership'. The 'sense of ownership' in process allows agencies and citizens to negotiate ideas, which imposes a process that attempts to build mutual understanding of interest and shared definitions of problems. Not having an ability to have voice heard can diminish the 'sense of ownership' in a situation where projects such as resource development or public infrastructure expansion are ultimately determined by factors of social and political desirability (Lachapelle and McCool 2005, 281; Lachapelle 2008, 54). Here the social and political desirability is materialized by making the voice heard. This characteristic applies to the initial period of a project.

Cases show that in the beginning of a project, 'voices are heard' is the key to the real materialization of 'sense of ownership'. For example, China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines project is quite successful in this sense. In this project, CNPC has spent all efforts to materialize 'sense of ownership' and have basically built up a 'good image' for itself. From the beginning of the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines project, attention has been paid to land acquisition, environmental protection and recruitment of local people. Land acquisition and compensation follows the principle that the acquisition does not take arable land or take arable land as little as possible. The acquisition is based on the principle of voluntary. If any villagers do not agree with the acquisition, the pipeline will bypass their land. The principle of 'compensation first, and then using the land' is strictly followed and the compensation is directly paid to the villagers (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2013). The report delivered by MCPWC provides the details of the land acquisition: the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in Myanmar formed a committee for the land acquisition and compensation. Members in the committee included the representatives from SPDC, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), the Township General Administrative Department, the Township Land Register Department, the Township Agriculture Department, the Village Tract Administer, community leaders and the farmers themselves. All the representatives together did a field study regarding the land and the crops on the land. Based on the field study, they calculated the amount of compensations, and submitted them to the government for

approval. The land and crop compensation agreements were signed between the farmers and the concerned company on behalf of MOGE when the approval was issued (MCPWC, 2017).

By this way, voices of the local people have been heard, making them have the 'sense of ownership' at the very beginning of the project. Further, to protect environment, the design and construction of the pipelines have adopted high international engineering standards. The environmental impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out by a Thailand-based company through an international tender. The EIA report gives comprehensive in-depth assessment of a number of environmental factors including air, noise, water quality, animals, and plants. The report also identifies feasible solutions for mitigating or preventing the potential effects of the pipelines on the environment (CNPC, 2017). This makes the local people feel not only 'voices are heard', but also 'lives are respected'. Hence, a 'sense of ownership' was successfully created at the starting of the project.

By contrast, the Myitsone Dam project has not created 'sense of ownership' among the local people whose 'voices were not heard' from its beginning. The result is that the project has been suspended since 2011. Villagers had been relocated into the so-called 'model villages' to make way for the dam, yet the housing in the 'model villages' and the living standard of these relocated people had deteriorated. There was insufficient drinking water and inadequate education and health care. The relocated people had to do low-paid daily wage jobs to feed themselves and they had to be constantly worrying about their future (Mungchying Rawt Jat, 2013). In terms of compensation, it is found that some of the payments had been passed to the Myanmar government rather than directly to the relocated people (Steinberg & Fan, 2012). Further, no evidence suggests that the compensation scheme has been improved since the suspension of the project. Some relocated people even suggested that the compensation payments were irregular. Consequently, some villagers refused to relocate and even worse, the relocation was reportedly carried out using military intimidation (Kirchherr, Charles, & Walton, 2017). Such activities did not 'hear the voices of grassroots and local people'. As a former employee of a Chinese dam developer said, "[i]t is a key habit of Chinese enterprises to always follow the government's instruction" (Kirchherr, Charles, & Walton, 2017, p. 115), and that "[o]nly upon the suspension of the Myitsone Dam, CPI (China Power Investment Corporation) understood that there is a public opinion with influence in Myanmar" (Kirchherr, Charles, & Walton, 2017, p. 118). However, the ex post remedies cannot restart the project.

4.1.2 The second characteristic: 'sense of ownership' in outcome

'Sense of ownership' may challenge conventional notions of power over the outcome. With this said, the 'sense of ownership' requires redistribution and reallocation of power over decision-making and execution of actions. Redistribution of power is complicated. Therefore, it always remains a political task no matter how little power is conceded or allocated to citizens. Such redistribution or reallocation of power can sometimes be practically impossible. Therefore, the 'sense of ownership' needs to be promoted in some other more tacit forms such as "providing information, promoting alternative public participation processes, encouraging different forms of knowledge to be used in planning, and allowing more interaction between scientists, developers and citizens" (Lachapelle 2008, 55). When a project is under construction, 'sense of ownership' can be promoted by allowing more interaction and more involvement of a wide variety of people, such as consulting scientists and recruiting citizens, and so on.

With this said, the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines project creates 'sense of ownership' by recruiting local people. The pipelines project has created many jobs for local communities and cultivated a team of technical and managerial experts in pipeline operation. During the peak construction period, local employment in Myanmar reached more than 6,000 people, more than 60% of the total employees of the project (Zhang & Sun, 2016, p. 39). This is the real materialization of 'sense of ownership', making it another contributor for the project success.

The 'tacit forms' are not only limited to those directly related with the project *per se*, but also involving the activities that make the developers more 'socially responsible' with the local people. Still in the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines case, CNPC and its partners have supported social responsibility-related projects such as education, road transport, power supply, health care, drinking water, and some other public good projects along the pipeline routes. A municipal water system to deliver potable water has been built, providing 220,000 tons of fresh water per year to more than 2,000 local residents. School facilities have been improved for nearly 20,000 Myanmar students. More convenient and reliable medical services have been brought to nearly 800,000 local people (Hong, 2017). By contrast, for the Myitsone Dam project, CPI had relevant social responsibility policies, yet these were more oral promise and plans than real practice and implementation. In the end of 2013, CPI issued its first social responsibility report. Yet the time coverage of its report is until the end of 2012, one year after the suspension of Myitsone Dam. The report indicated that most of the social responsibility practice was taken after the construction was stopped. In other words, it was ex post remedies (Zhang & Sun, 2016). Once again, the CPI did not do well enough to create 'sense of ownership' of the local people.

4.1.3 The third characteristic: the ownership distribution

The third characteristic can involve not only individuals in the physical place where a project (development effort) originates but also larger scales of engaged citizens across a region, a country and even multi-nations. Practice suggests that the more people have the 'sense of ownership', the more social and politically acceptability is created. Temporally, the 'sense of ownership' involves not only the present but also future generations who may reap the benefits or bear costs of any development decisions, for example those that may result in or mitigate climate change (Lachapelle 2008). Failure to materialize this characteristic can result in a total loss of 'sense of ownership' within the local people.

A typical example can also be found in the Myitsone Dam case. The affected area of the Myitsone Dam project is not only limited to the project site, but it also covers the whole basin of the Irrawaddy River, the mother river of Myanmar. However, CPI did not fully assess the affected area and people of the dam. The company's social responsibility practice was mainly focused on the community where the dam site was located and the beneficiaries were the people who were effectively under the jurisdiction of the Myanmar government. The result of these practices is the misallocation of the benefits and risks of dam construction in different regions and different groups of people. Obvious evidence is that the local government where the project was located had taken most of the economic benefits, while the general population of the whole basin had to undertake the potential negative social and environmental effects of the project (Jiang, 2011).

4.2 The importance of 'sense of ownership'

Our two case studies show that successful implementations of a project/development effort are those that materialize the three characteristics of the 'sense of ownership'. In the above-mentioned success case of China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines, it can be seen that from the very beginning of the project, voice from the local grassroots is heard. Land acquisition is basically based on voluntary. If land is acquired, compensation is directly paid to the local people before using the land. A variety of types of public participation has been pushed such as recruiting local people and cultivating a team of technical and managerial experts. Further, a comprehensive in-depth assessment of environmental impact has been undertaken to eliminate doubts about the impact of environmental factors including air, noise, water, animals and so on. Therefore, all the three characteristics of 'sense of ownership', i.e., the sense of ownership in process, outcome, and distribution have been materialized in the successful project.

Other cases also show that 'sense of ownership' leads to greater public acceptance of natural resource projects. For example, a study on the onshore windfarm development in southwest Scotland shows that public attitudes are more positive to windfarm developments in areas where local communities have a stronger 'sense of ownership' than in areas where they are not directly involved in the windfarm developments (Warren and McFadyen 2010). Another study on the rural water systems development in Kenya shows that psychologically 'sense of ownership' can make workers more likely to exhibit job satisfaction and organization-based self-esteem, which facilitates the development of rural water systems in the country (Marks and Davis 2012). Having passed the World Bank's strict sustainability assessment, the Nam Theun 2 Hydroelectric Project in Laos has gained community support and become a role model in development of large hydro power projects (Porter, 2007).

To put it simply, the key to success is that China's investment must be associated with expanding the overseas business to cultivate the 'sense of ownership' by putting the local people in their consciousness so that they feel they are a part of efforts to achieve 'common aspiration'. Table 1 presents the key elements of 'sense of ownership'.

Table 1: Comparison of 'sense of ownership' in the two Myanmar projects

Characteristics of 'sense of ownership'	**Contents**	**Examples of activities in a resource development project**	**China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines project**	**Myitsone Dam project**
Ownership in the process	Voices are hear and considered legitimate or valid	Land acquisition and compensation; social and environmental impact assessment; public opinion collected	√	X
Ownership in the outcome	Who has influence over the outcome through decision-making	Local people recruitment; construction of social	√	X

		responsibility-related projects		
Ownership distribution	How are the effects distributed, accepted and owned spatially and temporally	Reap the benefits of the resource development project	_	X

5. 'Sense of Ownership': A Key to facilitate BRI

Using the framework presented in Section 4.1, we find that the Chinese investors should pay more attention to its ways in dealing with local communities in order to build 'sense of ownership'. Building up a 'sense of ownership' is not easy, yet it is important due to the increasing overseas investment under the BRI. The 'people-to-people bond' principle under BRI provides a platform and opportunity to realize 'sense of ownership' so that development projects can have a friendlier environment. That is, 'People-to-people bond' can be a catalyst for energy investment in ASEAN through its facilitating role in contributing to the success of energy investment projects.

Although the priority of people-to-people bond in the BRI provides a new guideline for Chinese investment to build the 'sense of ownership', its implementation is not satisfactory. The BRI action plan emphasizes that the BRI "should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all, and efforts should be made to integrate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road". With this strategic direction, the Chinese investors are aware of the importance of ownership building with local communities so as to gain public support for specific projects, including those in the energy sector that are often controversial. However, the actual implementation is still unsatisfactory. While the principle of people-to-people bond has been well followed in the Myanmar-China pipeline projects, in the Myitson Dam project, such bond was not well formed.

In order to dealing with likely increasing overseas investment activities under the BRI, particularly for energy investment projects, the Chinese investors need to fully understand the public opinion and to undertake good social responsibility performance. Establishment of mechanisms to share benefits with the local communities over the project's life time is a way to gain sustainable support from the community. In other words, it is very important that the local people have achieved a 'sense of ownership' before and during the progress of projects. At the macro-level, building such an ownership needs China to change a few practices, including the way to presenting its BRI and replace unilateral efforts with bilateral and even multilateral efforts. Specifically, Chinese investors can take following measures.

The first and the most important thing is to understand and respect the different views and norms of people in other countries. Even inside China, it took decades for Chinese citizens to accept the doctrine of 'Development is Absolute Principle'. In fact, in ASEAN communities, such an ideology change has not yet been initiated and economic advancement may not be viewed as a 'win' outcome for them. More importantly, it takes time to show to the public that the projects are beneficial to the local communities. In this case, project development may need patience and the process may be tortuous and not

straightforward. Pushing a project through amid controversies may not necessarily gain good acceptance once the project is completed. In contrast to the Chinese normal practice, it might be better to invest time in building consensus and a 'sense of ownership' in local communities so as to nurture a good working environment for them rather than swiftly push projects development. This requirement is exactly reflected in the first characteristic of 'sense of ownership', i.e., the developer shall identify who has a voice and make sure their voice be heard at the very beginning of a project.

The second way is to improve communication methods. The Chinese investors are often good at making relationship with government but poor in communication with the local people, or the grassroots. In particular, Chinese investors are reluctant to dialogue with those having opposite interests and they lack experiences in organizing groups to support their projects. For these reasons, the project developers are often facing direct conflict with the local people. To reverse this situation, the project developers could organize supporting groups, or even supporting NGOs as an intermediate to communicate with the local people to minimize misunderstanding and controversies, to formulate better project designs and compensation scheme, and to address the disputes and controversies on their projects. This measure is also where the first and second characteristic of 'sense of ownership' can be reflected. Hearing the local communities' voice is of key importance to the success of a project. Further, the importance of the reallocation of power over decision-making can be seen here. The developers shall make the local people feel that they are given the power to be really involved in the reallocation of benefits and compensation of a project. The third characteristic, the redistribution of ownership, can also be reflected here. Particularly, the compensation scheme, which is directly involved in the redistribution of ownership, can be critical to the success of a project. The developers must be very carefully in dealing with this issue.

Thirdly, properly sharing benefits with the local communities is a way to gain support from them. Again, this is where the third characteristic comes in. Redistribution of ownership to make the local people feel that they are fairly treated can gain support from the local people towards developers' project. The way of sharing, is also important. While it is normal to compensate local communities in a lum sump way, it is better to provide continuous support, or engagement, over the project life time. For example, the project can provide opportunities to the local communities for jobs, making them in the same boat with the investors. Given the prevailing shortage of financial resources, the project investors can even provide loans and other financial assistance to allow the local communities to build their capacity for the project, a practice that is widely used in mining community development (Shi, 2005).

Lastly, project development strategies should be designed to reflect the long process. This is also where the third characteristic is reflected. The redistribution of ownership should not only be considered spatially, but also temporally. The benefits some projects created for the local residents in the short run may be limited. For example, although China has built many hydropower plants in Myanmar, the local people do not see many benefits because most of the electricity generation was exported to China and Thailand while the economic benefits were retained by the government (Zhao 2011). Given this situation, hydropower projects could be started at a small scale and to first meet local needs, whereby the dramatic impact of relocating large numbers of people could take place only after local communities have accepted the overall benefits of the project.

Much more could also be done on the side of the Chinese government, namely, realizing its obligation to promote good practices in overseas Chinese investment practice. The government should emphasize its role as a facilitator, not a salesman, and pay more attention to the environmental and social impacts arising from its overseas investment. While it is not feasible to directly regulate the behaviors of the numerous private Chinese investors, the Chinese government, however, could look into creating institutions imitating those such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). Such bodies could coordinate Chinese overseas investment, create legal frameworks to regulate overseas investment, and provide services to improve the capacity of overseas investors. Furthermore, the Chinese government could consider introducing a voluntary performance ranking system by which the Chinese overseas investors' performance scores could influence financing and other supporting policies.

More importantly, the government can facilitate overseas investment by creating positive image of China and Chinese investment by utilizing soft power. Soft power can be built through promoting successful Chinese stories that also have regional impact. Many Chinese lessons and experiences can be used to help ASEAN countries in their development. For instance, China's experience in improving competitiveness is a replicable example. The Chinese industrial competitiveness has been developed since its accession to the WTO in 2001. While initially many Chinese industries were worried about loss of competition with international peers, the reality is that China has eventually become a global factory. China's experiences in entering the WTO demonstrate that structural reform and other policy interventions are effective in improving national competitiveness and these reforming experiences are applicable to other developing countries (Shi, 2012). Regarding the energy sector, China's success in providing nation-wide access to electricity (Xinhua, 2015) is a 'success story' that is of particular relevance to ASEAN members such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Myanmar. Providing electricity access to 1.3 billion people in such a diversified landscape is a great achievement in human development by any standard. China's rapid progress in renewable energy development should also be able to offer useful lessons and experiences for the ASEAN countries.

The image building could be further supported by China aid programs, which, however should be restructured to be closer to the people than before. The current aid programs could be restructured to divert funds from 'image projects' to grassroots projects. Just as a Chinese scholar said, the Chinese government has learned its lesson from focusing too much on the elites, and now the government knows that "deals and agreements are not solid if they are not based on people-to-people relations" (Ives, 2017).

6. Conclusion and policy implications

This paper argues that 'sense of ownership' is the key to the success of investment projects in the energy sector and the BRI creates a new need and chance to promote building up 'sense of ownership'. This study uses the 'sense of ownership' framework to analyze the success and failure of energy sector investment in ASEAN and to provide a theoretical foundation for the people-to-people bond under the BRI. Building 'sense of ownership' is widely applied in natural resource management, in which energy is a key component. Energy projects, particularly hydropower projects, often has deep impact on

economic and environment and thus frequently tend to arouse controversy. Only with engagement in, and support from the community, can it be considered as sustainable, as in the case of the Theun 2 Hydroelectric Project in Laos (Porter, 2007). The building of 'sense of ownership' is particularly important in the energy sector in ASEAN because Chinese investment often incurs significant criticisms. ASEAN, where many controversial hydro power projects are undertaken by Chinese firms, further put them in spotlight.

The analysis shows that among the five priorities listed in the Action Plan, people-to-people bond should be the forerunner and foundation for other policy priorities to achieve 'sense of ownership'. Our study demonstrates that a successful building of the 'sense of ownership' needs to achieve it in the process, in the outcome and with a large scope of, present and future, stakeholders. Our study also shows that local communities' 'sense of ownership' can mitigate many of those criticisms and thus minimize challenges and difficulties in investment activities.

Based on the study of Chinese overseas investment in ASEAN's energy sector, two policy implication could be drawn.

First, 'people-to-people bond' should be placed as a priority in implementation of BRI. Even though it will not create immediate and tangible outcomes, it can create a friendly and enabling environment that minimizes challenges and difficulties for the BRI (investment) projects. Given the growing scepticism in ASEAN, increasing investment activities further boosted by BRI are not sustainable in ASEAN. Therefore, increasing social acceptance of Chinese investment in ASEAN is a must and building 'sense of ownership' is a key instrument to achieve better social acceptance. Therefore, implementation of 'people-to-people bond' is not only a component of BRI, but also a safeguard mechanism for BRI.

Second, the host communities and even the host country's voice should be considered in the advancement of Chinese investment. Building 'sense of ownership' requires ownership in the process (whose voice is heard), ownership in the outcome (whose voice is codified), and the ownership distribution (who is affected by the action) (Lachapelle and McCool 2005, 283). Chinese investors should pay more attention to its ways in dealing with local communities in order to build 'sense of ownership'. Traditionally, the Chinese investors are often good at making relationship with government but poor in communicating with the local people, or the grassroots. Chinese investors are reluctant to dialogue with those having opposite interests and the investors lack experiences in organizing groups to support their projects. The Chinese investors need to understand and respect the different views and norms of people in other countries.

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