Wasted Potential: Civic societies battle for participation in developing public policy

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List of Acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CAL	Civil Association Law
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDC	Civic Driven Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EA	Environmental Authority
ENGO	Environmental Non-governmental Organisation
ESG	Environmental Social Governance
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNPO	Governmental Non-profit Organisation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICNL	International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MD	Ministerial Decree
ME	Ministry of Economy
MECA	Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs
MENA	Middle East &. North Africa
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
NDC	National Determined Commitments
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
OCC	Omani Consultative Council
OCHR	Omani Centre for Human Rights
PBB	Plastic Bag Ban
PCP	Public Civic Participation
RD	Royal Decree
ROP	Royal Oman Police
RST	Rentier State Theory
SCP	Supreme Council for Planning
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SM	Social Media
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WM	Waste Management

Abstract

Following the discourse on civil society and its links to participation and policy development, this paper aims to assess the roles of civil society associations in influencing public policies in Oman. By contesting different theories in the context of the centralised rule authoritarian regime, the research shows that environmental associations have a degree of influence in government. With a backdrop of waste management, the study highlights the regulatory and governance issues surrounding waste and civil society associations, arguing that despite the restrictions that allow associations to be controlled by the government, their role and functions are akin to those in democracies such as representatives of society, and contributing to alternative development methods, with deviations highlighted in autonomy, policy participation and traditional advocacy practices. Thus, the paper contends with the question of co-optation vs cooperation. The paper describes general policy process methods in the absolute monarch ruled Sultanate and presents the challenges surrounding cohesive policy development in the environmental space, exposing the limitations of associations in influencing policy due to political structure and centralised governance system. More importantly, the research produces a distinction between regime and state goals as a core cause that impedes associations in gaining a voice toward policy development. Thus, concluding that while top-down rule prevails, associations input may be sought at the discretion of the government, but will not gain a seat at the policy making table. However, their methods in mobilising bottom up change can be used to influence the regime who wield the authority to impact policies if they can align their cause with the regimes priorities and strategically present the issue of waste as tactical solution to the fundamental challenges faced.

Relevance to Development Studies

Academic: It is argued that NGOs strengthen community values. In addition, as non-profit seekers their engagement in activities which benefit social welfare and community development has led them to become the embodied representation of civil society. The narrative on societal actors is perched under the flag of a democratization paradigm in both North and South discourse, however recent literature argues on the universality of said agenda. A review of civil society discourse in non-western non-democratic states has grown, contesting mainstream literature that equates civil society to democracy. Though common accounts of civic society actors in authoritarian regimes are often shaped through a lens of force, restrictions and mistrust, new literature suggests these actors can provide legitimising and stabilising forces that support the status quo as states undergo political liberalisation, yet there is limited literature on the nature and influence civic actors have on the type of development in authoritarian states. This study not only aims to contribute to the existing literature by assessing the adaptive and dynamic nature of CSOs and their contribution to state development in authoritarian regimes, but also provide new insights into the nature of political liberalisation of absolute monarch ruled states.

Social: The Arab spring of 2011 changed the dynamics of state-society relations in the Arab world. While the GCC was largely insulated, Oman was one of two Arabian Gulf states that were impacted. The Arab spring highlighted the fragmented relationship between state and society and called for a revision of the social contract between actors, where the latter could play an increased participatory role in governance. Literature post Arab Spring have

either focused on the democratising nature of former autocracies, or the failure thereof on the survival of authoritarian regimes' constituted shift toward political liberalisation. Studies of participatory governance in relation to this shift in the GCC is underwhelming, hence this paper aims to open a space for discussion and contribute to the developing literature.

Keywords

Governance, Oman, Participation, Civil Society, Civil Society Organisation, Non-governmental Organisation, Sustainability, Development, Waste, MENA, Policy

Chapter 1 Introduction

Development in the Arabian Peninsula has been predominantly led by the state, over the years the sustainability agenda, which calls for inclusive participation and engagement of all stakeholders, has gained prominence shaping nationally determined commitments (NDC) which run counter to the traditional practices of non-democratic regimes in the region. State efforts have largely focused on socio-economic issues, which gave rise to a diverse number of associations tackling socio-environmental challenges in the state such as waste pollution. 'Associations' will be used as an umbrella term to refer to Non-profit Organizations (NPO), Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Environmental Non-governmental organizations (ENGO) and Community Based Organizations (CBO) throughout the paper. The study of associations in policy development in this region has been underwhelming due to the top-down political structure that that exclude participatory governance. This study attempts to discern how public policy development is affected by the lack of inclusive participation from associations. We first set the foundation by providing active context on the governance issue of waste, as well as the restrictions surrounding associations in the country of Oman. This is followed by data driven analysis of the roles and functions of associations, assessing their diversity in addition to characteristics that emerge from the regulatory context, including contribution to development alongside the state as representatives of society. The final part will examine policy building in Oman, evaluating the relationship between policy challenges and the capacity of associations to engage in policy development. To conclude, a waste policy case study is examined using the context and data from previous chapters to determine how exclusionary processes undermine holistic policies.

1.1 Background

Development has been, and is, an intensely political process that extols methods for promoting growth and welfare by mobilizing both, internal and external resources, communicated through nationally determined goals, commitments, and visions, whilst direction and strategy are outlined by states "coordinating capacity" (Leftwich, 2000; Weiss, Hobson, 1995, p.2). Here, social characteristics are paramount in shaping political forces— class, ethnicity, and religion are determinants of the institutional and political structure that generate the state's unique ability for development.

Oman is one of six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Arabian Gulf, all of which are "a subtype of authoritarian regime" (Lucas, 2004). The Sultan is both head of state, head of government, as well as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in the absolute monarch. Whilst power is centralised to the sultan alone, he seeks advice from the Council of Oman, a bilateral parliament. The Consultative Assembly (Majlis al-Shura) is the council's lower house and is the only legislative body in the nation, each of its members are democratically elected to represent one of the eleven Omani provinces (Wilayat). The members of the upper chamber, known as the Council of State (Majlis ad-Dawla), are assigned by the sultan. The ability to participate has been diminished by this top-down approach since associations are severely restricted and political parties outlawed. Oman's Basic Law, the state constitution, created in 1996 ensures freedom of expression (Article 29), and freedom to form associations (Article 33), however in practice these are curbed. The constrained political climate creates a power imbalance in favour of the state and ruling elite. The ruling elite, made up of the royal Al-Said family hold relative

autonomy from socio-political pressures, appropriated by oil rents that enabled the regimes legitimacy through social welfare programs and development projects. The main players in charge of resource rents have significant political sway domestically, blurring the distinction between state and regime.

Two events are noteworthy - the oil crash, and the Arab Spring. Oil was a catalyst to the country's development upon discovery in the 1960s, the Sultanates co-dependency to this resource garnered a 'high income' status as oil generated about four-fifths of government revenue in 2000 (Index of Economic Freedom Oman, 2022). Though problematic, state actors did little to expand rentier economic structures that were dominated by political economic interests. This gave way in 2014-16 as a result of the oil price crash which thrust economic diversification into the spotlight. In tandem with the rise of the global sustainability agenda such as the Paris Accords, which Oman signed in 2015, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), climate change and the environment became key elements in national development strategies.

The 'Arab Awakening' of 2011 was significant in two ways "one at the level of Arab societies and the other at the level of authoritarian regimes" (Heydemann, Leenders, 2011). Protests erupted in Oman with calls for socio-economic and political reform, namely, to hold corrupted officials accountable, revise austerity measures, allocate more power to (councils lower house) Majlis Al Shura, and jobs to curb high unemployment rates. Unlike their counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), protests were not to destabilise the regime, but a call for a revised social contract "not simply at the implementation of specific policies on the part of the government, but at rethinking governance as a whole" (Cavatorta, Clark, 2022). The agency exercised by civil society exposed the limits of power wielded by the regime, and forced a reconstitution of the existing socio-political system, "survival of…monarchical regimes can be traced not to "tradition" but to institutional flexibility in attentive management of the regime's coalition of supporters and society at large" (Lucas, 2004). In order to decentralize power and promote greater participation in local governance, a certain amount of political liberalization in the form of increased governmental regulatory and legislative authority was allowed.

Following these two events, Oman's national development program dubbed 'Vision 2040' unfolded with a focus on economic diversification, governance, "environmental conservation and an empowered civil society that participates in all aspects of life, towards higher levels of human development" (Government of Oman, 2020), which echoed buzz words 'circular economy' and 'sustainability'. With an emphasis on participation and environment under the national framework banner, civil society organisations (CSOs) in the environmental space have emerged and have played a key role in tackling the persistent issue of waste management. This paper takes an analytical undertone toward civil society and the state, exploring the links between participatory governance of CSOs in authoritarian regimes in relation to state development.

1.2 Problem Statement

The mobilisation of climate strategies and participatory local governance are argued to be theoretical - the "limited reforms made by the regime were not meant as a step towards transition; instead, they were part of a strategy aiming to appease protesters and contain the threat of protests" (Abouzzohour, 2021). Further crackdowns on freedom of expression and increased restrictions on associations ensued post Arab Spring, upon Sultan Haitham's succession in 2020, "security agencies, particularly the Internal Security Service, continued to target activists and citizens, often for views they expressed on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter" (World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Oman, 2021). Hollow reforms extend to the climate arena, environmental conservation and social participation are contradictory, according to an Omani Centre for Human Rights (OCHR) report, environmental activist, Dr Ahmed Qutn, was arrested after a twitter post criticizing the Ministry of Housing Development for planning to build on a cultural plain (Annual Report On The Human Rights Situation In Oman (2021), 2022), conferring the argument.

The issue of waste management, namely Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), presents an immediate threat to the health of society and environment. As a result of rapid urbanisation, increasing population, and shifting consumption patterns, climate degradation coupled with health concerns are more apparent, yet "the…centralized political–economic regime in which the ruling elite has so far treated climate change largely as a symbolic vehicle directed at the international UNFCCC policy audience" (Al-Sarihi, Mason, 2020). This has come in the form of investments and development projects mainly related to renewable energy, nevertheless it is argued as a step toward severing its dependence to hydrocarbons whilst contributing to the climate agenda, the minimal attention and strategic investments in other sectors offers a concrete counterargument.

Environmental NGOs (ENGOs) work actively in encouraging people to participate in socio-environmental development programs. Based on these bottom-up strategies, they are relegated as agents of public service delivery rather than capacity builders, policy advisors, watchdogs, or challengers of state accountability, hence "no real degree of environmental NGOs can adequately participate in creating change" (Al-Sarihi and Mason, 2020). Whilst the government maintains a centralized top-down approach, "political liberalization allows the regime to choose its partners better for governing from an expanded regime coalition" (Lucas, 2004), alluding to participatory governance with absence of power to participate in governance.

We then ask, can CSOs build capacity and power to influence government operations or simply remain as government service providers?

1.3 Research Question & Objectives

The research question asks: To what degree is the lack of effectiveness of civic society associations hindering a better articulation of public policy?

This study can be broken down into the following objectives:

- Identify types of civic society actors existing under authoritarian regimes,
- Assess the governance structures that dictate their function, and outline how this shape their role in state development
- Discover the participatory obstacles CSOs face in engaging the state

The aim of the paper is to aggregate these findings and analyse how these results lead to a lack of cohesive public policies. The study uses waste management in an illustrative manor to showcase literature and articulate arguments.

1.4 Methodology

This study is of an exploratory nature, employing causal mechanisms in a qualitative method that includes primary and secondary data. Before mapping out methods of data collection, I identified set of relevant waste management challenges in Oman: lack of legislation and regulation, apathetic public attitude toward waste, absence of strategy and planning, and lack of data reporting.

Data Collection:

Certain questions had arisen from these challenges: what current policies, legislation and regulations in WM are in place? Where are the gaps and why? What factors affect societies attitude toward waste? What data is available on waste management in Oman? How has WM operations in Oman evolved? Would this indicate a plan?

Secondary (Desk) data: Consisted of the initial source of research and was collected from international databases, newspapers, government publications and documents as well as academic studies. With this, several limitations were exposed: lack of public information on initiatives working in the environmental space in Oman, inconsistent Waste management data, alignment of environmental waste policies with national development strategy, National Climate change strategies. Participation channels, Policy process in Oman, NGO rules and regulations.

Primary data: The collection and analysis of secondary data built the analytical frame and contextualization for this research while the primary data is used to clarify and supplement the analysis. Primary data which was collected from field research employed mainly in

qualitative basis with interpretation, synthesis, and comparison to help develop arguments and conclusions.

Identified stakeholders for primary research were involved in policy, waste management, and environmental movements in the city of Muscat. In total, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews combined with open ended questions with stakeholders from the public, business, academic and CSO/NGO sectors as shown in table 1.1. Questions were tailored to their knowledge (Example, interviewees in policy creation would not have knowledge surrounding municipal solid waste).

Biases: In data collection, a representative sample of different sources in triangulation, especially between primary to secondary data, produce a lack of transparency and data reporting which is common in such regimes. Thus, a degree of bias should be considered. Such setbacks also include lack of diverse resources in WM available, lack of response from governmental actors, peoples restricted speech on sensitive topics, lack of public data available to triangulate between primary and secondary research

Data Analysis: Identifying relevant categories at the initial level of abstracting (open coding); secondly, identifying the relationships between these categories (axial coding); and thirdly, accounting for the significance of these relationships (barriers and opportunities).

The coding process applied to primary data was applied to secondary data to analyse the influence of state-society structure on participatory governance processes.

1.5 Potential Risks and Ethical Challenges

Article 191 of the Omani penal code states, 'Whoever offends or threatens a public official in the course of performing his job, by reason of it, or because of his affiliation to it shall be punished by imprisonment', though the interviews do not invoke any criticism of public officials, criticism by individuals of government in any form have been subject to punishment. To protect interviewers, a disclaimer was sent prior to the interview, consent received for recording and any potential sensitive information deleted. In addition, names are not mentioned for security purposes. Finally, the paper is written purely for academic purposes to aid state development and should be seen as such.

Code	Domain	Directive
S1	State	Former Policy Advisor
S2	State	Climate Strategist
B1	Business	Environmental Engineering Consultancy
B2	Business	Waste Management Company
A1	Academia	Thinktank
A2	Academia	Academic Researcher
CBO	Association	Founder

CSO	Association	Environmental Activist
ENGO	Association	Executive Director
NPO1	Association	Head of Municipal Solid Waste
NPO2	Association	Head of Policy & Data
NPO3	Association	Head of Sustainability Centre

Table 1.1 Interviewees

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

The study is host to multi-level discourse within a contained discipline, touching on political economy of state-society relations, rights-based approaches toward change and development, and the multifaceted evolution of civil society [organisations], each encompassed within the frame of Development Studies. The theories reflected will contend to the different tunes and layers to aid analysis.

2.1 The power of change

The focus of this paper is inherently on the process of change, the theory of Civic Driven Change (CDC) developed by Alan Fowler and Kees Biekart (2011) is a framework for socio-political analysis and action to enact change. The premise of the theory lies in civic agency, Goldfarb (2006) determined that civic agency is the principle and concern where history, context, and power to define the situation matter. Cooperrider (1989) adopts an appreciative position on social realities and solving 'wicked' problems, while Ostrom (2005) extends this as a desired future that attracts the initiative, energy, and agency of many to move toward a goal (Fowler, Biekart, 2011).

Adopting these definitions, CDC contends the traditional notion that society is confined within "three distinct 'sectors': the state, the market and a social sector that often is labelled as 'civil society'" (Fowler, Biekart, 2012). Derived from Bourdieus concept of fields, CDC argues that a globally interconnected world has transformed socio-political relations which are embedded, rendering these isolated 'sectors' redundant, and instead promote these sectors as 'domains' that interact. Upon interaction, 'domains for change' arise from pressures and problem solving that can be initiated between sectors, into sectors (Fowler, Biekart, 2012). Such examples of integrations are market into civil society which produce social enterprises or hybrid NGOs, or civil society in the state, creating social and cultural service delivery organisations (Fowler, Biekart, 2012). How do these outcomes appear? Agency and energy. Agency are the resources or capital one possesses in their domain to create change. Energy is civic energy each individual possesses to attain a collective goal. Biekart and Fowler (2012) argue that complex 'wicked' problems can be tackled within these embedded domains by first identifying the processes and forces at play. Once comprehended, change can occur. Basically, once you learn the rules of the game, you understand how to play.

The CDC framework is made up of four major propositions and four constituent elements. The four major propositions include "that people's decisions have an effect in society. Second, being 'civic' is understood to mean pro-social behaviour that respect differences between citizens, whilst also showing concern for the whole of society. Third, Solutions rely on people imagining a resolved future situation which is strong enough to attract enough collective initiative for socio-political change. Fourth stresses that development and political

change processes are highly complex and therefore inherently uncertain and hard to predict" (Fowler, Biekart, 2012).

The four constituent elements include a rights-based understanding of political agency: inclusive citizenship, where each individual as well as collective identity is the defining relationship between a state and its political community. The politics of action: a CDC lens focuses on civic agency and is therefore not institutionally located. In whatever they do, people's agency contains 'political' choices which co-determine how a society thinks, functions, and evolves. The politics of scale: CDC view also orients to analysis which links local to global changes and back again. This feature of CDC ties to the third proposition of imagined futures: such inspirations have no limit to their span in time or space, nor a theoretical limit to innovation. Civic agency means that CDC begins with identifying a domain of change, utilising their agency, and harnessing their energy to create change, which leads to the final proposition of the politics of knowledge and communication: that places attention to the fact that civic agency is shaped by autonomy over power and knowledge. Ownership and control of mass media and blocking access to internet sites show that pathways for doing so are themselves part and parcel of power relationships (Fowler, Biekart, 2012).

2.2 Modes of Development

From the above, we can derive that CDC is inexplicably linked to development. The relationship between external & internal influences, the state, market, and society are correlated in a globalized environment. Therefore, a distinction between types of development happening at certain levels that shape change is important. Development, as per Lewis (2019) can be divided into two distinctive features: big 'D' Development and little 'd' development. For Gillian Hart, 'Development' is characterized as the conscious efforts of development agencies to intervene and promote positive change, and 'development', the wider patterns of societal change that produces both winners and losers from struggles around power and resources. Cowen and Shenton suggested that, historically, there have been two main ways of thinking about how societies develop and change: (1) faith in unfolding progress through which societies advance and peoples' lives improve, and (2) the reformist idea of state action to minimise the undesirable consequences of capitalism and bring order to processes of disruptive change. This principle was based on the idea of the state managing issues, an essentially paternalistic idea. Jonathan Rigg's takes the D/d distinction and offers further subdistinctions within big 'D' development: superscript development (**Dd**) and subscript development (Dd). Dd refers to the role played by developmental states in driving and directing development, Dd on the other hand, relates to the role of NGOs and community organizations in promoting change. This is more usually termed alternative development. Other forms of 'big D' intervention have originated in the for-profit business sector in the form of 'corporate social responsibility' and 'ethical business' initiatives. The 'D/d' distinction has conceptual value because it clarifies two different ways of understanding development and provides a historicised framework for their analysis (Lewis, 2019).

Bakker and Nooteboom note that, 'The "little d-development" approach … brings relational, unintended and bottom-up factors into the process of development that "big D-development" seeks to control'. This interface can also be approached through the broad conceptual lens of 'policy'. The framing of policy as part of an interface between 'D/d' then makes it possible to pay more nuanced attention to the relationships between and within states, markets and citizens and to forms of contestation that are taking place. Two further insights emerge from this: the potential value of a concept such as Long's 'interface' as a means for analysing such interactions, and the need for a critical under-standing of policy as an arena of contestation around 'D/d' that enables us to go beyond aid and agencies to encompass local and international relationships around state and capital. The possibility of rebalancing 'big D' development into a less Western and more 'global' project inclusive of a wider range of countries, ideas and approaches is becoming more real. Finally, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), are now to be applied to the rich 'developed' nations as well as the Global South, extending the idea of 'Development' well beyond its post-World War Two usage (Lewis, 2019).

2.3 My Oil, My State

It is assumed that change and development are interrelated, change produces development just as development brings change. CDC theory lies at the root of socio-political relations, understanding these relations identifies the process and forces to enable change that translates to development. The aforementioned theory describes different modes of development, however for it to materialize it must be contextualised. In line with Bourdieus concept, the state is diffused within the market or society. State theory will be used to analyse power relations between regime and society. In this regard, historiography of state development in a political economic context is imperative. Popular theories such as Gramsci's notion between hegemonic and non-hegemonic is relevant, especially in the wake of globalisation, but only a minimal degree when applied to Authoritarian regimes. Foucault theory of power is universally applicable, however lacks a rigid structure to build on state theory in this regard, Poulantzas case of class domination is inherently entrenched in the capitalist state, however the socio-political and economic nature of this case disqualifies it.

The Arab region Is distinctive in many features not least in its socio-political characteristics; however, one factor distinguishes its political economy from the rest. Oil. The absence of the 'third wave' of democracy, coupled with the rise of oil wealth created a distinctive development pattern, hence the trappings of this region require a targeted theory of development complimentary to its characteristics.

The idea of rent was seen as an economic concept with unique economic consequences. Economic rent represents the profit earned from the forfeiture of monopolistic use of real property, however the concept took on a new, more political dimension when applied to the modern Middle East. This emphasis on oil rent as the key factor in shaping the nature of Arab politics is what forms the core commonality of all rentier literature. Such exogenous revenue created a trans-regional economic structure in which symbiotic relationships redefined roles and responsibilities of both state and society. The premise of participatory democracy of "no taxation without representation" saw the opposite in oil rich states. Whereas

states accumulated wealth through its citizens, the Arab states sourced their wealth through exogenous means of oil rents, thus turning the phrase "no representation without taxation" over as a means to explain the stronghold of authoritarianism. The oil rent phenomena became known as the Rentier State Theory, coined by Iranian Hossein Mahdavy in 1970's. Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani furthered this theory, "inspiring the modern rentier state" (Hornberger, 1999) along with developing an understanding of the socio-political effects a rentier economy provokes by outlining four key characteristics: "Firstly, there are no pure rentier economies but rather situations in which rent predominates in varying degrees. Secondly, a rentier economy relies primarily on externally derived rent, Luciani states if over 40% economic revenue is made through oil, then it should be classified as rentier. Third, in a rentier economy, only a few are engaged in the generation of wealth. The vast majority of those participating in the wider economy are only involved in the distribution and utilization of that wealth. Finally, closely related to the third characteristic, the government within this broader rentier state is the principal recipient and distributor of rent" (Hornberger, 1999). These have both economic as well as socio-political consequences.

Economic: Abdel-Fadi noted the importance of public financing, oil financed development projects and programs such as infrastructure and social services created a domino effect of dependence, one between state revenue on external market prices, another society on the political elite who control these revenues. Ait Amara adds that as a result, a fragmented local economy emerges. While one sector is developed, it stifles development in other sectors such as agriculture or fisheries, prompting imported foodstuffs and subsidies (Altunisk, 2014). Moreover, this produces 'rentier mentality', "getting access to the rent circuit is a greater preoccupation than reaching productive efficiency" (Hornberger, 1999). Whilst society engages accumulation means, a conflated service sector emerges via migrants who attend to productivity.

Political: Luciani (1988) asserts that in determining how a government interacts with society, how it finances itself is just as crucial as how revenues are distributed. "The typical pattern of the expansion of government (penetration) through increased domestic taxation (extraction) necessitates concessions of power, or at least accountability and voice, in the allocation of this public revenue" (Hornberger, 1999). If the source of state revenue via society is absent, then representation is not obligated. The tendency for disconnected state/society connections due to external revenue and the variety of state structures that exist due to other variables are two key findings of domestic politics in Arab rentier states cited by Vandewalle. The latter is crucial to comprehending the range of governance forms present throughout the region (Hornberger, 1999). According to Michel Chatelus, little diversity in rentier behaviour is observed between states and individuals in the region. The state's central role in distribution and allocation allows it to dictate societies affairs as subjects not citizens, thus eliminating any political opposition. Jill Crystal notes another important factor in power relations, pre and post oil. Previously, business elites and the ruling class held a "symbiotic relationship". Trading elites countered traditional political power of tribal sheikhs via control of the country's economic resources, however the discovery of oil restructured the power balance and consolidated political power under the state.

Participatory: A combination of these also influences participation. Rex Brynen's theorised that, a long-term drop in petroleum earnings should invigorate societal demand for participatory politics. According to Rayed Khalid Krimly's study, the rentier state structure is significantly constrained by its own internal political restrictions, which calls into question the presumption that access to plentiful external rent permits for state autonomy. Adding to Brynen, Krimly noted that Saudi Arabia was compelled to sell off assets and drain capital

throughout the latter half of the 1980s oil crash in order to maintain government spending and continue its legitimacy. Due to the short-term political costs involved, states are unable to execute long-term economic decisions. F. Gregory Gause, III posits that by taking responsibility and governing the welfare of citizens, they raised expectations of the state. Thus, scenarios of either escalating crises and conflict, a gradual liberalization of the economy and of politics, or some combination of the two, were produced.

2.4 The Politics of Association

While the universality of CDC is recognised, its form under the socio-political governance structure of the rentier state suggests a nuanced approach to development. Edwards (2004) stated that civil society can be legitimately conceptualized in different ways, whilst traditional neoliberal perspective on civil society have driven policy and practice since the 1990s, established on the good governance agenda has reinforced the need to critically analyse the role of CSOs.

A contemporary view suggests "civil society does not always equal democratization and that CSOs can in fact survive or even flourish under (stable) autocratic rule" (Toepler et al., 2020; Berman 1997; Cavatorta 2013; Lewis 2013; Doyle 2016; Wischermann et al. 2018), nullifying the focus on rights-based movements in contestation with the state. Whilst ICNL (2018) reports a number of restrictive laws targeting elements of NGOs' creation, registration, and ongoing operations, the premise of the CSO theory in authoritarian regimes is that these weighted organisations are harbingers of Gerschewskis (2'13) three pillars of authoritarian rule and survival: legitimation, repression and co-optation (Toepler et al., 2020).

Two characteristics of CSOs are identifies yet differ depending on the functions performed: advocacy and social change on one hand, service provision on another. From these, three subgroups have emerged: "advocacy NGOs, non-profit service providers and regime-loyal NGOs supporting often populist and nationalist discourses" (Toepler et al., 2020). Moreover, due to ring fencing regulations of CSOs, their nature of operations are purposefully depoliticised and submissive to service provision or community engagement for resource access, continuity and security (Toepler et al., 2020; Giersdorf, Croissant, 2011). "For claims-making NGOs, the overriding issue becomes deploying coping strategies to survive repressive policies, whereas service-focused non-profits must adapt to new governance mechanisms in the welfare policy realms. [Moreover], for independent non-profit organizations focused on the service provision function, issues arise around questions of sustainability and access to government support which in turn raises the spectre of co-optation and depolitization, while the work of loyal NGOs tends be facilitated by the state" (Toepler et al., 2020).

CSOs generally engage in depoliticised advocacy that focus on the conditions for service provision to better social welfare (Kulmala 2016; Toepler and Fröhlich, 2020). Seibel's (1989) "mellow weakness" argument state that regimes utilise these advocacies as a deterrent to larger scale structural reforms and temper revolutionary ardour, thus strengthening the

regime's output legitimacy (Toepler et al., 2020; Liverani, 2008). Another perspective offers that these tactics give NGOs a voice, create possibilities for them to participate in the policy-making process, and promote the state's social policy goals in non-contentious insider ways (Kulmala 2016; Toepler and Fröhlich, 2020). This way, CSOs are included in governments agenda of welfare modernization. As a result, regimes adopt a liberal viewpoint that emphasizes working with civil society to develop the state without involving politics. This raises the questions whether this is just another means to achieve control through co-optation (Skokova et al. 2018) or do they signify political liberalisation and the state's embrace of "neoliberal thinking on service contracts" (Toepler et al., 2020; Kang 2019: 499; see also Tarasenko 2018). The latter claims that authoritarian regimes attempt to imitate Western-style models of partnership and collaborative governance.

The universally accepted literature on CSOs is that "they act as schools of democracy and serve to bridge divides in society, foster civility and cooperation and thus facilitate both economic performance and good government. Strengthening civil society will thus lead to stronger economic and political performance" (Toepler et al., 2020). Political transformation occurs under authoritarian regimes through reform rather than revolution since the state and civil society coexist in a working capacity. Participation of CSOs in the creation of proposed laws and policies helps to increase public support for state policy (Doyle 2016), but it is considered that these groups frequently appear to have authoritarian organizational structures and go against the liberal notion that they are "schools of democracy" (Toepler et al., 2020; Wischermann et al., 2016).

CDC can be perceived as a curriculum of change; the applicability of the theory is premised on comprehending the environment in identifying potential pockets for change. CDC will act as a foundation to which other theories build upon, Hart constructs an understanding of development within, around and between states, RST contextualises power relations between state-society, these complements both theories by prescribing the role of the state and society in development. Toepler et al. assesses state/society development under a CSO lens. CSOs in this context assesses the space for change. The sum of theories provides a holistic approach to answering the main research question.

Chapter 3 Governance Matters

To understand how a structure is built, one must start with the foundations which it is built upon. By this logic, if we are to comprehend the intersectionality between waste and associations, we need to be informed of the mechanisms that structure the issue. With that, this chapter aims to evaluate the level of effectiveness of associations by providing active context of how waste is governed and the perceived issues arising from it on the one hand and outlining the rules and regulations of associations to form an understanding of the environment they can operate it on the other hand. While one aspect informs the waste issue, the other provides the manoeuvrability of associations to tackle the issue.

3.1 The mismanagement of waste

"The municipal management of…waste is one of the simplest, most common signs of a working relationship between the state and its citizens" (World Bank Group, 2016)

MSW management sits at a social, political, and environmental crossroads. Environmental hazards from plastic pollution and its degradation to ecosystems has been widely documented, health and safety issues caused by haphazard management of waste is a concern for society, whilst the politics of managing waste highlights working mechanics of government. Since the 1970's, rapid urbanization and an increasing population generated 1.7 million tons of solid waste per year, approximately 4,700 tons of municipal waste every day (Zafar, 2020), costing an average of 100 million Omani rials annually to manage waste by 2020 (Owed, Barghash, Nadabi, 2022; Be'ah, 2020). WM is considered a public utility, its operations are solely managed by the state as is common in the Arab region, this consequently leaves little scope for participation.

Waste is a contentious issue in the Sultanate, both in macro and micro-organisational structures as well as management systems. Laws on non-hazardous waste management were established in 1993 as dictated by ministerial decree via the ministry of regional municipalities (MD 17/1993) who handled municipal solid waste (MSW). The regulations surrounding MSW stipulates the responsibilities of municipalities including the issuance of environmental impact assessments (article 14), the treatment of waste, which should not affect the health of society or environment (article 11), the registration of dumpsites (article 12), the separation of hazardous and non-hazardous waste (article 13), and finally except for designated areas, no dumping is permitted (article 6). Whilst these laws provide adequate guidelines for both society and municipalities, in practice "most of the solid waste is sent to authorized and unauthorized dumpsites for disposal which [contributes to] environment and health issues. There are several dumpsites…located in the midst of residential areas or close to catchment areas of private and public drinking water bodies" (Zafar, 2020). An interviewee in the WM space recalls that dumpsites were located in nearly every neighbourhood and attracted insects and pests, and was often treated by burning, posing a variety of health and safety hazards.

Due to a lack of reporting and documentation, the urban planning department was unable to locate landfills, and discovered that people's lands were being used for dumpsites instead. The interviewee recounted a case in the city of Sohar, two hours from the capital Muscat, where hazardous and non-hazardous, municipal and sewage waste causing the groundwater to be polluted. In essence, the authority that had set the rules were the same bodies defying them.

Despite the direct affliction of the people, waste management evolved into resource management through top-down governance, not from general society. Three interviewees separately described how Oman's WM system transitioned from dumpsites to engineered landfills from a story that neither could corroborate as fact. It was said that his late Majesty Qaboos was driving with his convoy in an area within the capital and observed black smoke from a distance. Upon enquiry, his entourage explained that as commonly practiced, the municipality was burning garbage. Oman is a country with a rich environmental history, the first in the Middle East to establish an environmental policy in 1982, and environmental ministry in 1984, reflecting the importance of conservation and the seriousness of waste disposal malpractices. The Sultan assembled a task force and in 2006, a National Strategy Report laid down a cohesive plan which led to the establishment of the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company 'Be'ah' in 2007. In 2009, a Royal Decree (RD 46/2009) granted the company the mandate and status as the entity responsible for solid waste management (Be'ah, 2020), stripping the municipalities of this responsibility. A senior figure in the MSW department within Be'ah (NPO1) stated how the relationship between the company and municipalities – still responsible for general cleaning (sweeping the roads, beaches, and parks) – were meant to complement one another but instead, created friction, fragmentation, and confusion.

Furthermore, continuous changes in government organisational structures encountered challenges in enacting long-term strategies. As a state-controlled service, WM policies were initially under the Ministry of Municipalities, after the creation of the Environmental Service Company its activities transferred to the Ministry of Economy (ME) which dissolved in 2011, after which the responsibility was split between the Ministry of Finance and the Supreme Council of Planning (SCP). SCP was shortly merged with the re-establishment of ME. These transitions stagnated WM strategy and policy formulation, whilst causing cross accounting and disorientation between ministries.

When asked about the main barriers in WM regarding the state and society interviewees across public, private, academia and WM sectors declared a lack of modern legislation, absence of a regulator, societies mindset and attitude toward waste, as well as culture. In fact, the existing 1993 laws have never been updated to include specific laws on MSW. Two reasons are speculated, either the shuffle of WM allocation prevented coordinated actions from being executed or is linked to the absence of a regulator. In order for public services delivery to function, three institutions are required to maintain operations, an operator, legislator and regulator. The absence of a regulator creates a vacuum, interviewee NPO1 notes, "regulators are the ones that 'hold the stick' to hold people and companies accountable. They set targets and look after the WM plan. When it comes to telecoms, it's very clear on who is the regulator, who is the legislator. Organised roles are vital here, and the absence of this makes it confusing for everyone". NGO1 echoes this, "even the legislators don't understand their own roles. Are they just the legislators or are they regulators as well? You have ministries creating programmes and projects regarding waste that's not in their jurisdiction". If legislation and regulation are the foundations of a state, then the dilapidated laws structuring the waste sector are a preview of the wider societal, economic, and political challenges.

Society is a key stakeholder in WM and is often seen as a challenge to the waste problem "from the perspective of…conventional developmental discourse, culture represents an impediment to development and transformation" (Zo'by, 2019). One interviewee notes, "unless there's draconian enforcement where people are getting taxed and fined, then it's a 'not in my backyard' mentality" whilst another alludes to societal expectations, rendering it a "مجتمع ريحية (complacent society) with an expectation that everything's gonna be taken care of by somebody else, and he/she shares absolutely no responsibility of their own actions specifically in waste". However, in a study 'Our parents were good at this' (2017), Jamila Hakam investigated the traditional practices of WM and sustainability and found that prior to structural developments, imported foodstuffs, and welfare subsidies, societies practices were sustainable and noted that religion (Islam) played the greatest factor influencing beliefs and attitudes about waste, followed by family upbringing and culture, and finally education and tradition (Hakam, 2017). Thus, the main obstacles to society becoming a part of the solution (rather than a problem), can be attributed to rapid developments that caused a change in consumer patterns and behaviours which in theory has impacted culture, a lack of awareness of the role waste plays in climate change, as well as how this directly affects livelihoods.

3.2 CSO regulations

CSOs play an imperative economic and social role, filling in the gap's governments fail to. In democracies, CSOs are allegedly independent of the state, and work toward the wellbeing of society. They also contribute to policy-building, providing research, advocacy, expertise, and act as a link to communities (Chiara, Giorgetti, 1998). CSOs in authoritarian contexts are traditionally understood as cultural societies and charities, "Article 1 of the Civil Association Law (CAL) defines an "Association" as "any permanent group of natural persons organized to achieve purposes other than profit making and aiming at performing social, cultural or charitable activities" (Oman Law Blog, 2017), but a contemporary view uncovers emerging environmental advocates. The premise of wellbeing and community ties remains, but lack of autonomy is manifested in the laws governing associations and as shown by article 134 of the Penal Code, stating associations, parties and organizations that violate Sultanate statutes or social and economic systems are forbidden to be formed. Another divergence from CSOs in democratic states is the misconception of their role by civil society, due to the belief that the state assumes all responsibilities, as well as a lack of a supportive legal framework such as stringent laws on funding, also limited encouragement from decision makers and finally, minimal engagement of CSOs in policy development (Mubarak, Alam, 2012).

All non-profit organisations fall under CAL, these laws are implemented and regulated by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) who govern, supervise, investigate, and are authorised to impose penalties; subjecting associations under the rule of MSD with no international recourse as Oman is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Thinktank founder, Salman Zafar observed, "NGOs play a very crucial role raising public awareness in any kind of issue, be it environment or gender-based issues and there are very few NGOs in Oman who are active in this kind of space." Despite freedom of association being enshrined in Basic Law, laws surrounding associations appear to

disenfranchise formation and participation and are vague, broad, and intrusive. The relevant articles pertaining to CAL can be found in appendix 1.1.

Interviewing associations in the environmental space uncovered three main barriers, registration, financing, and laws regarding organisations in each field. An impediment of consequence stems from Article 11 which authorises MSD to shut down or reject a CSO if it concludes a lack of "need of its services or in case there are other associations fulfilling the…requested activity" (GCHR, 2015) thus constricting the number of NGOs in a given field. When questioning the lack of ENGOs in the country, NGO1 affirmed the conditions of its registration was to become a general Environmental NGO instead of a marine life research association as intended, "MSD only wants to have one NGO per topic which doesn't make sense at all because there's only so much that one NGO can do to cover the broad spectrum of environmental issues in the country." This law ultimately displaces and informalizes other organisations, and while a pledge to amend CAL during its initial Universal Periodic Review in January 2011 was promised, there have yet to be reforms by the Omani authorities (GCHR, 2015). Due to the lack of response from MSD on the issue, the existence of this law is debated either due to ease of access and control by the government, or management of knowledge production and dissemination which allude to regime security and stability, and simplicity in mapping out NGOs as civil society stakeholders. Registration is the path to formalisation and recognition but also a hindrance. A youth led CSO highlighted the systems complexity and immobility which deter youth from participating, "I think it is important to get registered at some point, but the process is a challenge so I just choose not to give power to registration because that will be a mental block if I'm not able to", signifying the lack of cohesion between government and society. Furthermore, association registrations may be invalidated due to the law restricting their numbers in each space; however, that does not prevent their formation, participation in public issues, or recognition by government bodies. A CBO active for 5 years disregarded the registration issue completely, stating the lack of micromanagement allows for flexibility and greater impact.

Financing is a point of contention for all NGOs. Literature on western led non-profits warn of conditionalities or agendas that comes with funding from organisational actors. In autocratic regimes, the threat of hidden agendas from external actors is the leading narrative. Toepler et. Al (2020) contends that government support for revenue-starved non-profits creates funding dependence that allows governments to co-opt these organizations, especially when domestic funding sources are limited. As a result, NGOs will forego foreign funding, or more generally comply with restrictions at the expense of their size and scope of operations in order to cope. The four actors researched for this study each had a unique approach to waste that was tailored to the size, characteristics and modes of operation which demand different funding requirements. While Article 42 of CAL prohibits receiving funds from an international donor without prior approval from MSD, this is only applicable to the registered ENGO. Domestically, a portion of their finances are sourced from individuals and corporations via membership fees and donations. Funding is primarily provided by international donors, such as the US government which has sponsored a conservation project since 2006. The spokesperson recalled one instance where an application was rejected. Unable to monitor the utilisation of funds, the government blocked donations specifically from the US in the midst of the Arab Spring in 2013 which lasted for over a year and caused severe financial strain, underlying the fragility of NGOs and the importance of alternative domestic financing. A government non-profit organisation (NPO) is not registered under MSD and is solely funded by the governments' sovereign wealth fund. Whilst not financially profitable, their initiatives have proven to be economically viable, and their operational policies guided by sustainability and circular economy reinforces

the states position as sole caregiver. CBO works on a volunteer basis, though informal, they have established close ties with government figures and funding is often in-kind from municipalities, volunteers, and state-owned environmental institutions. CSO has a strong social media presence that offsets any major financial requirements, resulting in their following attracting corporate sponsorships but is threatened with being marketed as a 'trend' or for exploited for its reputational value.

3.3 Conclusion

Irrespective of financial capabilities, associations are at the behest of the government, either through regulations or direct funding which dismantles its autonomy yet leverages its positionality as a component of civil society to function within the framework. Whilst Oman is a party to international conventions, their value and effectiveness are minimal when implemented due to weak institutional frameworks. Guided by short term financial profitability to reinforce legitimacy, sustain welfare expectations and public expenditures, the WM landscape leaves little room for investment, overlooking its potential for economic profitability. The degree of importance subscribed to the sector is evidenced in its governance, or lack thereof. In its place, formal and informal associations have proactively taken on the issue of WM despite the strict regulations. In this regard, it seems the acknowledgement of governmental actors about operational unregistered organisations are tolerated in so far as they adhere to general laws and remain depoliticized. It appears that the relationship is mutually beneficial, they abdicate government accountability and enable laws such as CAL, as opposed to the role of NGOs in democracies as watchdogs and challengers of power imbalances. The processes and forces outlined, described by the regulations of associations and the attitude towards waste governance highlights the need of a multidisciplinary and innovative approach by associations to tackle waste.

Chapter 4 Engagement & Dynamism

Associations in democracies are assumed to be different than those in authoritarian states and are thought to be treated with suspicion by the regime. As a result, associations are judged not to be as effective in their role as representatives of society as they are restricted by the state. As evidenced in Chapter 3, the state controls the formation, operation, and mobilization of associations. Chapter 4 aims to assess to what extent these assumptions are true. Guided by the data accumulated, this chapter presents the types of associations that emerge given the ringfenced environment presented in the previous chapter which will be measured against Toeplers typologies. It also seeks to discover whether the development discourse in authoritarian context contrasts with those in democracies by directly incorporating Hart's Development theory in chapter 2. Finally, a main factor defining associations are their capacity to represent society, we evaluate this claim through their degree of engagement with society in comparison to the state by outlining mediums derived from the UNs participation toolkit. While chapter 3 outlines how regulations dismantle associations agency, this section analyses the effectiveness of associations by comprehending how they operate in obtuse spaces, and where in their approach does the proverbial glass ceiling lay when it comes to participation.

4.1 Association Diversity

In democracies, civil society is equated with trade unions, political parties, and associations, they are viewed as bastions of resistance, defending individual liberties from an unjust state. Contextualising civil society in autocratic Arab nations has been widely debated, are they identified by religious allegiances, tribes, social communities? "Despite many disagreements among Arab intellectuals they seem to concur on one thing, namely that a genuine civil society, no matter how it is defined, does not exist in any Arab country"(Al-sayyid, 1996), if we address civil society through a rights based approach of citizenship, then one can assume that "Omanis in the modern world would not be citizens of a state, but subjects of a sultan" (Marriott, 2020) with respect to the political system and the line of demarcation toward freedom of associations. In which case we turn toward civic society, "'civic' is understood to mean pro-social behaviour that respect differences between citizens, whilst also showing concern for the whole of society and not just for oneself" (Biekart, Fowler, 2012, p.7). From existing associations, whether advocacies or charities, 'civicism' is inherently found in individuals' agency to indulge their freedom to act. Aiken and Holden (2008), derived from Bourdieus concept of fields, suggests that this is done within a set of learned patterns or structures (Taylor, Howard, Lever, 2010), positing associations freedom to improvise within the identified processes to influence change. In this regard, we seek to understand what form of associations emerge from the restrictions ringfencing their ability to operate and function, whilst identifying their approach in working with the state and society.

The issue of WM is not homogenous, it requires diversity and ingenuity on the part of actors involved. Thus, we examine the nature and characteristics of the four organizations and their approach to WM by assessing status, structure, politicisation, and area of impact, then compare profiles against Toeplers (2020) typology of CSOs in authoritarian regimes to comprehend the emerging civic actors. Politicisation in this regard is defined as any act that proposes to influence government actions or policy, directly or indirectly, at any capacity.

Association	Status	Structure	Politicised	Impact Area
NGO	Registered	Formal	Yes	Projects
NPO	Registered	Formal	Yes	Policy
CBO	Unregistered	Informal	No	Infrastructure
CSO	Unregistered	Informal	Yes	Mindset

Table 1.2 association characteristics

ENGO: The only official ENGO in the country was established in 2004 by siblings Sayyida Tania and Sayyid Tariq, linked to the royal family. The spokesperson confirmed, "our role as an organisation is very much linked to the people. The heart of what we do is try to conserve Oman's natural heritage", with a research based scientific approach, the organisation utilises an ensemble of advocacy and awareness campaigns toward people and government entities alike, and acts as a connector between the two. Though an organisational structure is in place with 10 employees, AGMs are held where members can engage and discuss issues or aspirations for the ENGO. "There is a bit of a disconnect in terms of civil society finding their voice and actually bringing change on, as a CSO we are the voice of the people", the formal NGO has developed a relationship with the Environmental Authority (EA), acquiring access by exchanging knowledge, data and creating forums with relevant stakeholders to address issues that require government attention. Furthermore, their main impact comes from the initiation of infrastructural and societal projects and programmes that tackle environmental problems.

NPO: As the sole WM operator owned by the government investment authority, Be'ah functions under private company law and operates as such, though do not generate profits. NPO2 explains "the vision and mission of Be'ah is to protect the environment for future generations", which adopts sustainable practices and promotes circular economy initiatives in line with national goals. NPO1 states "Be'ah is operating using best practice and our good faith to tell you the truth. When there was no order, and pending contracts, we played the organising role. We do self-regulation", without a regulator and an unresolved policymaker, the NPO operates at a semi-autonomous level and leads the national WM strategy. As such they are involved in WM policy committees and task forces, contributing toward the development of the industry. In addition to transitioning WM infrastructure, operation, and methodology, the NPO also have a dedicated corporate accelerator, Eco-Innovate for SMEs working in the industry, sustainability centre, and have collaborated with government entities on educational programmes. The state-owned entity wields the feasibility to function as an association, with the privileges of government access and influence.

CBO: The only association headed by a resident, has grown to 38 volunteers since inception in 2019 mainly comprising of non-Omanis. With an informal structure, they operate on an ad-hoc basis, mobile in different locations and communities. The female founder reiterates her refusal to register as "support might not be the same", they are the only association to coordinate with municipalities, utilising labour and machinery to clean up beaches, wadis (valleys), and highlight blind spots in infrastructure such as lack of bins, and awareness such as language barriers. Their positionality is unique in that it is not built by citizens, offering a new paradigm for the vast number of residents in the country. Through a network of cooperation, the organization's approach is unique in that it reaches out to government entities, the general public, as well as those who work directly in the environment, such as fishermen, on a feedback level to combat waste pollution. Their function lies in the spaces that others have left behind, such as clean ups, and work not to influence policy, but to enhance government outreach in identifying areas of development.

CSO: Since inception the CSO has been contending with the registration processes, though the founder admits that as a youth led initiative, the emphasis is less on formality and more on impact. Without a physical base or membership requirements, the strategic focus on social media not only bypasses financial need, but allows the movement to remain independent, mobile, and effective in an unstructured format. This approach passively diffuses power to the people without political constraints or organisational bureaucracy. The initiative was born as a result of the insurmountable waste problem that had created hazardous conditions which inspired the founder, who champions wellness under the philosophy of physical fitness and nature, to create a song with a message for environmental justice, which includes a line مطلوب للعدالة (justice is wanted) alluding to policy reinforcement. "It's the mindset you want to capitalise on, because when you force people to change they rebel, but when people are inspired to change through art, like a song, it breeds compassion that opens people to changing their behaviour", the movement adopts an ideological approach that targets compassion; which the founder believes is the root to its success.

Toepler outlined three types of CSOs, "claims-making NGOs that refer to human rights, environmental and other advocacy groups that are more political and the primary target of repressive actions. Loyal NGOs for those organizations that are also principally political (or politicized), but supportive of, and supported by, the state and often engaged in countering rights discourses. Non-profits refer to mostly apolitical, primarily service-providing organizations, which are increasingly the beneficiaries of supportive policies" (Toepler et al., 2020). Weighing each organisation against the typologies, we find that neither specifically belongs to one category alone and fall within a spectrum of informality and politicisation. CBO touches on the characteristics of loyal NGOs with sentiments of non-profit service providing operations that are supported by government entities, not policies. The loose organisational structure of CSO is perceived to be apolitical, however its method of practice is intrinsically political. ENGO and NPO are both in tangent with their stipulated definitions, yet ENGO are not political in the traditional aspect of going against government in as such as working with them. NPO detaches from its category in as far as the policies surrounding its mandate are non-existent and functions as on a semi-autonomous level. Despite political constraints, each possess a power to enact change, whether in mindset, infrastructure, projects or by policy. Their role in, for, and as society, contends with that of democracies, we then question how the dynamic nature of associations translate into state development.

4.2. Associations in Development

Development takes many forms whether policy, project, programme, or movement in a physical, or ideological sense. Development is akin to process but equates to intervention. The latter speaks to three types of intervention, one on the market or global level such as capitalism, on the national level such as paternalistic models of state intervention from the effects of capitalism, and local intervention from fallacies or injustices as activists, knowledge generators, or project implementors; each of these 'developments' seeks to influence policy. Policy is understood as an arena and acts as an interface of D/d development, "a key element in understanding the relationship between 'big D' and 'little d' is the capacity of the state to develop and implement its strategies in the face of global pressures and historically constituted local institutions" (Lewis, 2019). In this case, we look to 'big D' development as state led development, and 'little d' development as NGO and community driven 'alternative' development or change.

Two observations arise: first, the sustainability agenda has replaced the democratisation agenda, and as a result NGOs offering alternatives as 'little d' transform to an appendage of 'big D' under said agenda. 'Big D' development in the 1980s – 1990s was the transition of authoritarian regimes toward democracy as a political component of the neoliberal agenda. Political liberalisation included democratic governance whose main components consist: participation/engagement, transparency, ethical conduct and accountability (Gill, 2009) which bears a resemblance to the global sustainability agenda such as the UN SDGs which call for cooperation in the form of collaborative governance, transparency, ethical conduct such as fair trade and ESG reporting, and accountability evidenced in Goal16: building effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations, n.d.). Traces of this agenda are found in Oman's nationally determined goals, 'Vision 2040', which aligns to the SDGs by way of enhanced governance, economic diversification under the banner of circular economy, environmental conservation, and a participatory society.

The associations working in the waste space have promoted sustainability in their practices, as NPO3 states, "Be'ah from its offset had a sustainable vision embedded into its operations" while ENGO advocate for sustainable consumption and a ban on plastic bags through lobbying, or the collaboration of associations such as 'Vulture Restaurant' which combines the research of ENGO on migratory birds with the landfills operated by Be'ah that provide food for these migrating species as an innovative way of transforming waste to resource. "Once newly democratic state institutions took up alternatives for which NGOs had pushed, NGOs were left with the uncertainty of what to do next other than help the state make a success of these new orthodoxies" (Mitlin et al., 2007; Dagnino, Olvera, & Panfichi, 2006; Racelis, 2007) emitting scents of co-optation rather than success, a familiar theme with CSOs in the authoritarian context. This presents itself in the form of NGO professionals working in government entities, or under their programmes, such as Be'ah (NPO) who developed a curriculum with the Ministry of Education, though as a state owned entity is argued as concomitant, but the diffusion of ENGO members in government entities and vice versa, or in the case of the CSO founder who was approached by the Environmental Authority (EA) (formerly Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs), to be the 'face' of

a policy indicates a reduced space of associations for alternative development and implies an increased threat of conformity reducing them from innovators to technocrats.

While the global sustainability agenda administered a new wave of 'big D' development, understood by the adoption of state policy frameworks and programmes, the plight of 'little d' development can be perceived as admonishing associations capacities as innovators or disruptors. However the function of NGOs is non-linear, "NGOs are, then, both endogenous to development (understood in its systemic sense) while often being viewed (and viewing themselves) as exogenous to it when they engage in their interventions" (Mitlin et al., 2007), their existence, actions, and relationships with people can only be understood in the context of how they relate to these more 22fundamental societal actors, as well as to the connections that exist between them, the state, and the market. In the context of Oman, associations relay the message of civil society to the state and act as a connector, and as advocates for sustainability in the cause for environmental justice, associations may be granted spaces to infuse reformist bottom-up approaches. The course the state charts, the rest follow is the message an interviewee relayed,

> "With Vision 2040 life environment, and sustainable development is put so that it's higher on the agenda, and private entities have that on their radar where they want to demonstrate support for environmental programmes. For us that's a bonus because that means more support from the private sector. On the other hand, diversification of the economy is also important, so there's a lot of industrial development that's being fast tracked and the pace of sustainability and sustainable programming is not matching the pace of that development".

This opens opportunities for associations in both streams, one for potential resources via the private sector, second is being embedded in state development, though this runs the risk of regressing associations as a government actor, it potentially creates a placeholder for systemic alternatives.

4.3 Engagement of Associations

There is a common theme with all associations, the youth. 63% of the population is under 29 (Kutty, 2022) and led the call for social reforms in 2012, hence engagement is paramount to development, "a key question, then, concerns the extent to which NGOs are engaged with the public struggle for ideas and influence over the direction of public thinking on development or the "good society"" (Mitlin et al., 2007), every initiative relayed is targeted toward the youth, CSOs environmental justice jingle is performed in educational institutions around the country, CBOs clean ups encourage youth participation, NPO have a dedicated social outreach program, and ENGO host events and educational activities attracting youth. As representatives of society, associations are obligated to engage relevant actors by reaffirming their role as connectors, the UN identifies key Public Civic Participation (PCP) indicators for engaged governance in Arab countries: community based civic engagement, political voice, electoral, and social media (SM). With the exception of electoral, "Isin (2009, 2012) rightfully argues that conceptualizing citizenship as a legal status or in terms of routine practices of participation, such as voting, overlooks how those who… 'act politically' and thereby

constitute themselves as citizens" (Cavatorta, Clark, 2022), associations are embedded, if not the instigator by civic virtue, of these engagement indicators.

Community organisation according to the Uns (2013) PCP is volunteering, membership with an association, and community-based problem solving; associations, formal or informal, are a catalyst of community organisation as demonstrated in the study. Relevant political voice indicators are protests or demonstrations and contacting public officials. While protests are linked to social movements, associations use lobbying as an effective means of engaging with public officials, the lack of engagement mechanisms such as formal feedback channels require exploitation of networks to communicate with decision makers, a climate strategist who also sits on the board of the ENGO reveals, "It's not really legal, for instance the US legalises lobbying, for us it's not really illegal, but using the connections that you actually have to make the case and tell the story. We've been very effective in utilising the more emotional side, or the political leadership style because people who are in government want to leave a legacy, so there's a lot of stakeholder collaboration engagement that really pushes our agenda forward", essentially attaining political voice is by and part of social capital. "Bourdieu's concept of social capital puts the emphasis on the power function (social relations that increase the ability of an actor to advance her/his interests). Social positions and the division of economic, cultural, and social resources in general are legitimized with the help of symbolic capital. From the Bourdieuan perspective, social capital becomes a resource in the social struggles that are carried out in different social arenas or fields" (Siisiäinen, 2000), in the Arabian gulf a form of social capital alluding to Bourdieu known as "wasta" is typically found, it is "the phenomenon of using "connections" to find jobs and obtain government services, licenses or degrees that would otherwise be out of reach or would take a long time or effort to obtain" (Ramady, 2016). Wasta is essentially a form of using weak and strong ties in order to achieve an objective or 'end goal', and is an effective method to deal with weak institutions (Ramady, 2016), a director of an organisation explained, "the reality in Oman is that things don't move forward if you don't have figureheads, especially government, you have their ears more when you have someone's name attending the meeting, also when it comes to donations and contributions. We wouldn't be as successful if it wasn't for our figurehead", in 'act several associations have a chairman, patron or president with a title or member of the royal family. One instance of social capital in action occurred when a member of an association was confided on government plans to build coal power-plants and successfully lobbied lower and state councils against pursual.

Finally, social media (SM) and Information Technology (IT) have played increasingly important roles in recent years. To bypass regulations and avoid repercussions some associations have shifted to a virtual presence, such as CSO whose founder believes that SM has the power to influence policy because it acts as societies megaphone (Toepler et al., 2020). With social media, information flow and use was transformed, engagement was enabled by empowering the capacity of individuals and organizations, as well as serving as a powerful platform for the exchange of information, ideas, and suggestions among citizens and facilitating citizen–government collaboration (Al-Aufi et al., 2017), in the absence of an engagement mechanism, social media has become Omans arena for public discourse, an NPO representative noted that in the absence of a regulator who act as a channel between waste institutions and the public, turn to social media to fill the void when lodging complaints or feedback. A former policy advisor uses the example of twitter as a platform Omanis use to suggest policies, though believes that they do not have direct means to influence policy but can use SM to express their needs which can be taken into account when creating policy if the government utilise these channels effectively.

Literature suggests that the use of social media by governments fosters transparency, which is linked to good governance, as well as trust among citizens, and responsiveness related to civic involvement (Bonsón et al., 2012). A study *citizens' perceptions of government's participatory use of social media* (2017) by Al-Aufi et al. uncovered that governments in most Arab states use SM to broadcast news and updates on relevant topics. However, despite the fact SM use has steadily increased over the past decade, governments have reluctantly shown interest in enhancing citizen engagement or encouraging collaborative and interactive governance through SM. Despite the Omani government promoting e-services and established IT as a modem toward a knowledge-based economy in Vision 2040, the findings correlate to that of the Arab world where the use of social media by governmental agencies to interact with citizens is one way (Al-Aufi et al., 2017). However, data suggests this is not true of public officials, a director of an environmental engineering firm explains that, when working on a project, mandatory social impact assessments (SIA) are conducted by consulting Walis (governors) of an area, who then utilise SM to communicate the project, and gauge instant feedback from the community. She extends, "SM is an extremely influential and powerful tool, especially with regards to waste and what we're trying to accomplish with behavioural or culture change, you see influencers getting involved, promotion of initiatives or events, but also it informs us on what's happening in our oceans or desert dunes." In fact, all associations interviewed stated that society flagging waste issues, such as plastic pollution, via SM partially drove their initiatives, and attributed a gradual shift toward sustainably conscious behaviour to increased awareness campaigns.

4.4 Conclusion

The type of development emerging from associations may differ from those of democracies, but not their impact. The variety of associations and diversity of approach can be assumed as a direct observation of their need and highlight their effectiveness in tackling the waste problem from various angles. Their position as a representative, connector and influencer is evidenced in their engagement with both, state and non-state actors. Section 3.1 evidence societies ingrained sustainable practices altered by rapid development, hence the role of associations act as a combination of advocators, capacity builders and knowledge disseminators. They aim to revitalize traditional practices through a climate change lens to influence behaviour via alternative methods. Their capacity to forge and maintain relationships through the possession of social capital allow them to function in an unassuming manner which seeks to play into the states agenda to attain its own by way of passive reform. Despite the restrictions surrounding associations in autocratic regimes, their degree of effectiveness refers them as subsuming actors who seek to influence policy by making it attractive to decision makers. The lack of governance structures surrounding waste have created an opportunity for society to directly participate in defining development in the waste space, a sentiment found in CDCs third proposition of imagined futures. Thus, we question whether this prospect translates into the centralised policy arena.

Chapter 5 Policy & Participation

The previous chapter encapsulated the effects of bottom-up alternative development, guided by diversified efforts and engagement mechanisms of associations. However, it also suggests that systemic change is invariably top-down policy driven. This data led chapter assesses whether associations bottom-up efforts can influence top-down policy development. We first identify policy processes in Oman, outlining two general ways policy is created, followed by a more critical view on environmental policy challenges and limitations of associations, examining how these may result in fragmented policies by a short case study. Finally, an analysis of the case study is committed in congruence with previous chapters to evaluate the importance of associations in policy development.

5.1 Participation & Policy Development

Policy making in democracies is often governed by the 'Good Governance' agenda, "good governance can encourage the achievement of sustainable development…at the local level, especially in terms of formulating policies and strategies to achieve sustainable regional development by a collaboration of involving stakeholders" (Naldi et al., 2021) bearing a representative model of collaborative governance. Collective decision-making is at the heart of collaborative governance, of the six criteria that define it, two are noteworthy: the participation of non-state actors, and engaging participants in direct decision making beyond a consultative level, "collaboration implies two-way communication and influence between agencies and stakeholders and also opportunities for stakeholders to talk with each other…in a deliberative and multilateral process"(Ansell, Gash, 2007), a stark contrast with authoritarian models that traditionally engage centralised, and often top-down governance.

Oman follows this pattern to some deviation, while there is no clearly documented pathway of policy creation, there are two identified processes: top down and bottom up. An interviewee with experience in state policy distinguishes between the two, "top down is a direction that is more general which the government takes, then trickled down to form other smaller policies VS bottom up when you have an entity that raises a specific issue to tackle. An entity can be a ministry, an institution, or an authority. This can be triggered by a combination of things like international pattern, or individual organisations request." The actors that make up the policy development body related to environment and waste consists of the Omani Consultative Council (OCC), Ministerial Council, waste institution(s), the Environmental Authority (EA), and public agencies such as the Royal Oman Police (ROP), when asked about the involvement of these actors, the NPO spokesperson who represents part of the waste institution body explained, "each of them input their specialization or perspective, and each ministry contributes as well. So, when you prepare legislation you need all these little inputs, mix and match from at least the major stakeholders," when asked further on the next steps he added, "it goes from EA to the cabinet and then it becomes law, or executive regulations by EA, so it doesn't have to be mandated by royal decree, so it's like ministerial decision." Al'Abri (2015) argues that rather than 'bottom-up' policy, it can be better described as 'mediated policy', this type of policy is said to offer a forum for negotiations among

government, and relevant stakeholders, including the public. Because there is no formal redress for the public in authoritarian regimes, the 'public' infers community participation, community in this regard are the associations and the private sector.

Community participation in Oman faces a combination of internal and external impediments, not least by the political structure in place, but also from the lack of human capital resource with expert knowledge of environmental issues, conflicting interest groups, and gatekeeping by local elites which can lead to a lack of public interest in becoming involved (Botes, van Rensburg, 2000). The creation of Vision2040 sought ENGO input when unrolling the commitments, the interviewee shares, "we received draft documents, attended some workshops, and provided feedback and comments. Once Vision 2040 came out, there were meetings where they engaged various [ENGO] board members, more so for 10-year plans for environment and natural resources programmes" but iterates that the organisation was not engaged in agenda setting or analysis and were called when the programme stonewalled. An interviewee in the private sector reiterates the need of a multidisciplinary approach towards developing policy beyond merely consultation, "a lot of people in the past have been burned by roundtables where either the policy doesn't come out or it comes out the complete opposite of what you've engaged with, so feedback wasn't taken on board and people think, why should I bother?" What this suggests is a degree of participation in devising policy, however the outcome, i.e., the policy, is exclusively centralised to the few. A study conducted by Al-Sarihi, and Mason (2020) addresses institutional and structural challenges for climate policy integration in Oman that relate to the impediments faced in community participation.

5.2 Challenges in Environmental Policy Development

Climate policies are revered in the goal to achieving the sustainability targets, but are fraught with challenges for all countries, a common one being "a lack of political will to give priority to environmental concerns" (Runhaar et al., 2014; Lafferty et al., 2007; Dupont and Oberthür, 2012). The environment has always held significance in Oman as the first country to establish a Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA), however in 2020 MECA dissolved into the environmental authority (EA). Some speculate this move was to reduce costs and streamline ministry effectiveness and roles, other debate that stringent legislation on the environment hindered investments and jeopardised job opportunities when the country faces high unemployment rates, a number saw this as a regression of environmental importance in the country, whilst some argue that as an independent body it would enhance climate policy integration. A spokesperson weighs in "this didn't take their authority or power away; they still have the same standing. They still have authority over legislation, laws and monitors and inspections, only the structure has changed". Though this does not pose any immediate red flags, its lack of representation in the Council of Ministers could impede the implementation of Oman's national climate plan, further distancing the goal of associations.

In addition to the challenge stated above, Al-Sarihi and Mason (2020) outline that climate-related data accessibility, quality, and availability provide significant issues for decision-makers, the head of data and policy in Oman's WM institution shared, "the biggest challenge would be establishing a baseline to understand where you are today so you can strategize

where you want to be in the future. So, data availability and collection to be able to fit into a coherent narrative is the baseline of everything. You must have a common view of things with clarity and transparency in order for all the different moving parts to fall into place, unless there is a shared access to data you won't be able to converse in the same language", this also concerns themes surrounding accountability, transparency and communication. 3.1 states Be'ah (NPO) are the designated waste management operators, however beaches and public areas still fall under municipalities raising the question of data reliability, an issue interviewee B2 airs,

> "How do we know the correct data is being used to generate findings and publish reports for the country? There is a huge gap in accountability and transparency. The buzz words [circular economy and sustainability] might drive a lot of divisions, strategies, and plans, but when it comes down to actually implementing, and asking how are you moving against these KPIs? I've seen a huge gap that we aren't. Sustainability covers many different topics, how are you going to achieve one if everyone functions in silos? When I need information and speak to someone from biodiversity and someone else in the air department, I might get two different stories within the same authority, there is very little cohesion. Oman is small enough to fall under the radar at a global scale, so what is our motivation to achieve these targets and goals?"

the intersection of big D and little d illustrated in 4.2 outlines that while state agenda drives strategy, associations can steer efforts toward its goals by exercising its energy and agency such as providing a forum for collaborative exchanges, however outcomes of exchanges only come to fruition if aligned with the regime's priorities, revealing a separation between state and regime. Hence in order to enact change, associations must not only corroborate with state goals, but their agenda also needs to appease the regime as illustrated in the lobbying methods in section 4.3.

Climate strategist S2 explains how the lack of data and cohesion creates fragmented policies that affects society and industries alike, "a lot of the policies are very cross-sectional. If a policy bans fisheries in this area, it's touching on housing development and social investments because what if the person makes their living on those fish? The issue is that we work in silos so much that we don't share data." Chapter 4 elucidates how joint efforts in producing projects are credited with the success of associations addressing waste from various perspectives with a common goal, which overlaps onto the following challenge, "Oman lacks meaningful collaboration between climate change experts and actors in economic development and other sectors: the National Committee of Climate Change, [comprised of representatives from different ministries, authorities, councils and universities] is politically detached from economic decision making" (Al-Sarihi, Mason, 2020) noting the absence of civil society representatives. This also alludes to a further challenge, the limited autonomy of governmental entities to make climate related decisions due to the regulatory frameworks, and shortfalls in financial and human resource capacities (Al-Sarihi, Mason, 2020) S2 who works in the agriculture and fisheries sector provides an example,

> "The laws are so stringent, but it doesn't make sense. These ministerial decisions came into force because of energy and desalination sectors and their operations require [infrastructure regulations] for safety and environmental reasons, but for other sectors who don't, it actually obstructs the environment. So, the challenge that we have is a lack of technical expertise and resources that are able to debate on why they should make an exception for this. Then you go into the whole red tape of changing the law. A lot of companies, based on their relationship can have a lot of say if its ministry related and siloed on one issue, but if it's general law (royal decree), it's nearly impossible to challenge. Oman is like a ground that breeds one challenge after the other, it's a lack of proper resource planning."

associations in democracies function as watchdogs, in autocratic regimes they enable governments as a coping strategy to operate as evidenced in section 3.3, thus limiting their own effectiveness toward laws that cause environmental harm as opposed to their purpose of protecting it. The amalgamation of issues in knowledge and awareness, institutional design, and the availability of resources both financial and human, produce a network of systemic challenges in realising concrete climate related efforts brought about by the regimes interest in maintaining political-economic leverage.

A final challenge posed by Al-Sarihi and Mason is "the lack of clear leadership in coordinating climate-related efforts, which has…led to fragmented climate-related efforts and initiatives". State development efforts are initiated by conducting current situational assessments, by identifying what is lacking the state creates a strategy with clear determined indicators, goals, and organised roles, but as a country develops the mode of development required changes. The former policy advisor and current World Bank employee S1, explains,

> "Oman went through a very hard phase that required a lot of effort which was building the infrastructure of the country, educating the people, primary healthcare and the basics. Now, it is hard in a different way because you need more sophistication. People are educated to some extent. We have a transportation system, airports, a healthcare system, so what do we do with all of this? What do we want? The World Bank delegation came to Oman last December [2021] and asked a simple question, 'what do the Omanis want?' Do you want to be a logistics hub? A tourism hub? Open, closed? What do you want? I don't think we know. Maybe we'll get there one day, but this impacts policies because this is the top down."

Whilst Vision 2040 does indicate specific sectors for development such as tourism, manufacturing, and mining, they detach from the climate agenda as investment in these sectors are financially motivated, not preparing for the evolving regulations and industry practices. Since Oman's NDC measures depend on foreign funding, capacity building, and technology transfer, climate change has mostly been handled as a symbolic issue, the head of sustainability in the NPO shares,

> "there's this rush for ESG, but if you talk to the senior members in government they'll say, 'this is CSR, its charity, good for it.' Now everyone's like, 'no wait, it's not about CSR, we're losing investors, our cost of capital, our cost of debt is going up, we need to have an ESG policy and framework.' So, people are taking this seriously now. I want to say because they believe in it, but it's not the case. It is because they are trying to attract foreign investors and the first thing they ask to see is your sustainability and ESG policy."

Section 4.2 outlines development as intervention in three folds, global, national, and local, while ESG is a clear example of external influences affecting national development, this top-down arrangement is nonreciprocal to the bottom-up methods of associations, who in the absence of a regulator, adhere and practice the global standards governments seek to adopt. While Oman is a signatory to several international treaties, its lack of enforcement is akin to the direction of its climate strategy. The regimes approach to reinforce its position and legitimacy runs counter to that of the state's vision, whereby any action perceived to threaten its authority, even if in contribution to Vision 2040, is remediated. An interviewee explains,

> "Oman has no roadmap when it comes to environmental targets and sustainability. We have these big metrics for Vision 2040 but downgraded the environmental ministry to an authority that has a board of directors. The head of that board has no relevant experience,

and the vice chairman is the Minister of Energy. Oman needs to ask itself what it wants out of the environment and sustainability, because nobody knows."

The last point illustrates the power imbalance in favour of the rentier economic structure still leading the discourse in development. The final challenge can be argued to be the most important, the late Sultan built the modern welfare state on the back of oil revenues, though the vulnerability of this crutch is recognized, the current regime cannot sketch a comprehensive diversification strategy without oil rents playing a dominant role in development discourse.

The challenges posed above create a manifesto of policy development hindrances, the political system and institutional architecture create a visible barrier for collaborative governance and inclusive participation. While concluding remarks in chapter 3 suggest the governments dissociation between registered and unregistered organisations, in policy programs such as Vision 2040, and environmental policies, only ENGO and NPO are engaged, highlighting the level of detriment the rule surrounding one association per topic and the regulations surrounding associations are, the variety of tactics presented in chapter 4.1 outline the need for a multi-pronged approach and only having one viewpoint discourages further participation and engagement. What is evident is how the compounded challenges inform atomistic policies. These challenges also present the line of demarcation between the notion of a modern state intrenched in the global market, interacting with external actors, and the traditional rentier model which feeds into the existing regime. The short case study below will consolidate these challenges to illustrate how the lack of effectiveness of associations prevent a better articulation of public policy in the waste space.

5.3 Case Study: Plastic Bag Ban Policy

In its top-down governance structure, Oman attempted to solve the waste problem via policy instruments in a structured effort to influence the actions of the governed. Three types of policy instruments are distinguished: legal/regulatory, economic, and communicative/informational, each type is based on a different rationale regarding the way actors are to be steered: by changing cost-to-benefit ratios which Oman have not yet recognised, or by informing about them, which is the main approach adopted such as brochures, lectures and radio and TV programmes, or by restricting or allowing behavioural options such as policy to be discussed (Runhaar et al., 2014; Glasbergen, 1992; Vedung, 1998; Hellegers and van Ierland, 2003; Brukas and Sallnäs, 2012). It was estimated that domestic waste would increase to 1.89 million tons by 2030 (Okedu, Barghash and Al Nadabi, 2022; Be'ah, 2016), despite governments efforts to curb the issue by advertising the dangers of plastic pollution the problem persisted. In January 2021, the Sultanate of Oman banned single use plastic bags in the governments' effort to conserve the environment. Taking the definitions of policy types described in 5.1, the plastic bag ban (PBB) was essentially 'bottom up' policy driven, while the top-down agenda of sustainability drives 'trickle down' policies, the issue of plastic pollution was raised by multiple actors, those with powers in determining agenda setting only, such as

the lower council and state-owned entities, and those with executive authority such as ministries.

In March 2020, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA) - now the Environmental Authority (EA) - issued a Ministerial Resolution No. 23/2020 banning the use of plastic bags, "the decision to ban single-use plastic shopping bags was based on the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 114/2001 and the Royal Decree No. 18/2008 defining the terms of reference of [MECA] and adapting its organisational structure" (Arab News, 2020). Article 1 stipulates "Companies and institutions are prohibited from using single-use plastic shopping bags to preserve the Omani environment" (Oman Law Diary, 2020), article 2 imposes administrative fines for those who violate the stipulated provisions. While the policy alludes shoppers to find alternatives, the policy is mainly directed at corporations on the manufacturing and supply of single use plastic bags. In 2016, around 12 million plastic bags were freely provided to customers, while the country dumped an annual 728 tonnes of plastic waste, the regulation was meant to curb waste and reduce pollution (Koe, 2018). Even when disposed of correctly, the lightweight plastic bags previously manufactured were easily blown away from landfills and bins which clog waterways, damaging agricultural land, pollute the oceans which cause harmful effects for marine life, and become a breeding ground for insects and pests such as mosquitoes (Oman Observer, 2020). By December 2021 local publications such as the Muscat Daily newspaper reported a reverse of the policy banning plastic bags, "these were soon replaced with thicker 50micron bags, which are now provided free at most shops" (Taha, 2021). From a full ban on plastic bags, the compromised policy then provided thicker bags at a cost, to a complete regression in providing them for free. In the online article a mall manager mentioned that in fear of losing customers, their establishment resumed the practice after witnessing others, and added that societies culture in Oman of carrying their own shopping bag was not a norm and that society was not ready, explaining that even with the availability of thicker plastic bags to purchase for a minimal fee, customers refused since it was commonly free (Oman Observer, 2020) rendering the policy obsolete.

5.4 PBB Policy: Evaluation & Discussion

This section will analyse the PBB policy as an interface of development and as an arena for change by assessing the relationship between state and societal actors with the market providing a surrounding context. As part of this process, information from previous chapters is consolidated, and the theoretical framework is utilized to assess the rationale for the policy creation, why it failed, and the position of associations as a stakeholder of civil society in its creation and implementation. The analysis will first contend with the motive, then flow with the different stages of the policy cycle model based on Althaus et al. (2013).

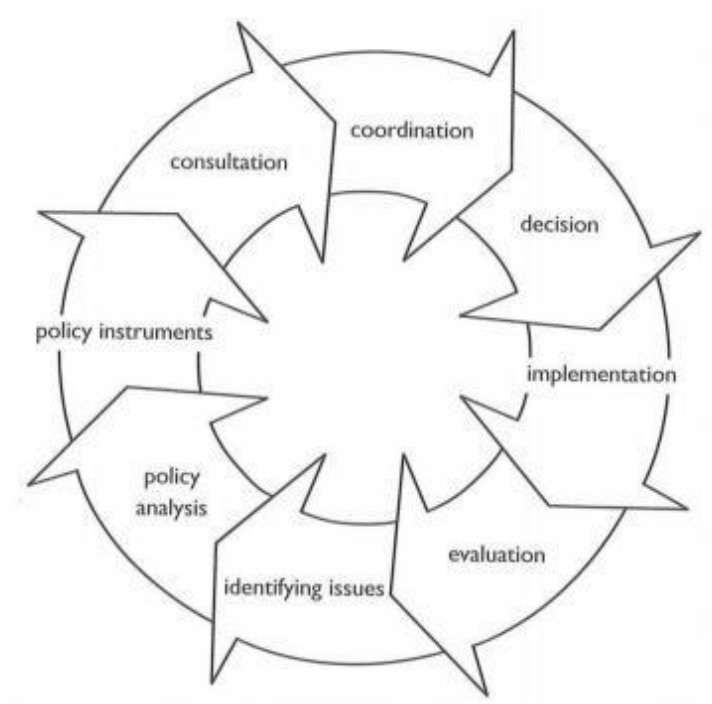
The announcement of the PBB policy was hailed a success for the country as a step toward its commitments to the sustainability agenda, aligning with Oman's ratification of the Montreal Protocols administered by Royal Decree 23/2020, the Montreal Protocol relates to the regulation, production, and consumption of man-made chemicals that have ozone depleting substances. When asked why this policy came about, the spokesperson present at the roundtable discussion explained "it came from multiple places, from the ministry, from the

councils, they wanted to stop plastic because it was becoming a problem. You'd find it everywhere, especially tourist areas". The detrimental effects of plastic pollution had been a key issue and focus of all associations' awareness and educational campaigns, particularly ENGO who have been lobbying the government since 2005. The result of the decision can be argued as the recognition of civil societies collective agency and energy, following CDC theory, the emergence of this policy to tackle a 'wicked' problem such as plastic waste arose from the embedded domains of civil society and the state. However, we cannot overlook the regimes habitual pattern, rentier state theory posits the development and investment of sectors which facilitate the economic rentier system, 3.1 outlines how the waste problem emerged due to rapid growth enabled by oil revenue, and as an expenditure and public utility it does not fit the regimes rentier pattern. RST also alludes to societies dependence of state welfare, therefore in the downturn of oil prices, the state must seek other streams of finance to meet the expectations of society or enact a gradual liberalization of politics and economy. Therefore, we posit that the policy was created due to the effects of waste pollution in financially driven diversification efforts of priority sectors. In 2021 tourism contributed 2.1% towards the GDP with a forecast of 10% through its plans to attract 11.47 million tourists by 2040, while investment opportunities are valued at 15bn Omani Rials (EUR 30bn) (Al Nassriya, 2022). Offering an array of terrain, Oman is home to the richest wildlife in Arabia, particularly marine life. Turtle watching and whale shark excursions have been a top attraction for tourists, yet greatly impacted by plastic pollution, an initiative ENGO have been fighting for as a core cause of its organisation. CSO founder and environmental activist weighs in,

> "We bring tourism again, but nobody has spoken about the importance of the environment, and you can see nowadays, environmental awareness grows first, then you promote tourism. But what we see here, tourism comes before the environment and this is a big disaster, everything that was done [for sustainable tourism] was not a true solution. It was a social media ploy to say, we have done one and two and three, but there was no actual action."

We can argue that the government's emphasis on economic demands and symbolic leadership on climate is done in order to secure financial resources for society and by extension the regimes legitimacy, however a counterargument can be made that this short-sighted approach temporarily appeases a symptom and does not tackle the cause. It has produced a pattern that has disillusioned society from the states paternalistic approach of development.

Figure 1: policy cycle stages model



Source: Althaus et al., 2013

The model of policy cycle stages seen in figure 1 enables the assessment of the PBB policy process and identify problem areas. In the stages presented, I argue that only agenda setting, policy analysis and policy instruments were consistently followed, while consultation, coordination and decision were widely overlooked and interjected into implementation, the evaluation stage is debated. Agenda setting as mentioned was raised by multiple actors in the legislative and executive branches, policy analysis and research on the issue was discussed in relevance to the NDCs which informed the policy instrument. Because the issue involved behavioural patterns, the policy bodies relied on a regulatory approach to alter consumers consumption, thus relieving the weight of plastic pollution. I debate that consultation, which should involve interactions with a range of actors including the relevant associations as the representatives of civil society on this key issue, were not conducted. This runs counter to Toeplers theory of CSOs that provides the perspective that tactics such as those outlined in section 4.2 describing associations' collaborative efforts in designing change through cooperation with each other, with society or with the government, would give associations a voice that create possibilities to participate in the policy-making process to develop the state without involving politics. The ENGO spokesperson states,

> "[ENGO] has been having these conversations over the years with the [previous] ministry of environment. When they decided to do the ban, they kind of informed us that this was in the pipeline, and it was going to be coming forward, but we were not engaged. It was done overnight, and we feel like society could be very much more prepared leading up to it, there was no awareness raising that went hand in hand with that. It would've been successful if it did"

chapter 4.1 and 4.3 describe the variety of associations methods and tools to influence bottom-up changes, the very same issue the PBB policy targets, the behaviour of the governed.

In a developmental context, we can argue that the PBB policy, identified as 'big D development', encroaches on 'little d-development' which it seeks to control. This is reinforced by the regulations on associations presented in 3.2 outlining how the state drives the direction of development by attempting to restrict the agency of alternative development approaches.

The manner in which the policy was enforced, compounded by the pace of implementation resulted in unintended consequences. When asked about the outcome of the PBB policy, the head of MSW of the NPO who was involved in the agenda setting aspect contended,

> "They implement these policies in a rush without thinking things through and it fails horribly and becomes a stigma. The worst thing you can do is bring something up that has not been studied. So, on the ban on plastic, they rushed – they did it in such a haste to apply this policy that they didn't have awareness campaigns for the people, nor did they make alternatives available. They didn't think who would be affected by this like the factories that produce plastic bags. The owners of these places went to complain about how they're losing money, so to try and fix the problem, they gave them a regulation to follow on thickness and sizes of plastic bags to manufacture that are now available in supermarkets. But at the same time, these thicker bags have just replaced the thin bags, so what did we achieve in the end?"

This also speaks to the absence of the coordination portion of the policy which ensures consistency across government and does not contrast with other existing policies. The oversight in coordination and analysis of this policy infringed on another major sector in Vision 2040, manufacturing and industries which is said to be the second biggest contributor to the GDP after energy (Al Maashani, 2022) This reflects the weak institutional governance framework presented in 3.1 which has no coordinated structure or organization for waste, and reinforces the challenges in 5.1, especially the intersectionality of policy which allude to the need of environmental policy integration, and state directive.

I conclude that the failure of this policy is derived from the lack of participation. Two main points were raised that alluded to the failure of this policy, society, and inclusion. When addressing the topic of the failed PBB policy, the ENGO board member stated for accountability measures members of the association approached the chairman of the Environmental Authority (EA) who had deflected responsibility, "the chairman said, 'I swear, all Omanis are conscious about [plastic pollution], the only thing they're lacking is faith', and he says something very interesting, 'If [Sheikh] Khalili comes from a religious perspective and says that plastic is a sin, then everyone would stop'. So, then whose job is it to lobby and push Al Khalili to say that?" Two arguments are made, one that the exclusion of associations participating at all levels of this policy was a factor to its failure, chapter 4.3 illustrates associations effectiveness in influencing behavioural change through its engagement with, and as a part of society. While the government acknowledge the activities of registered and unregistered associations, it regards them as service delivery vehicles and a marketization tool to utilize at their disposal as done when engaging ENGO on their expertise for Vision 2040 programs on environment and resources, or in section 4.2 on requesting the founder of CSO to be the face of the PBB policy yet disregard them when making policies on the same issue. The government still maintains the mentality of 'state does all.' Secondly, the statement by the chairman is an example of the regime's detachment from its people, section 3.1 of the study discusses society and identifies that while sustainability is engrained into their practices, climate change is not. The government does not acknowledge the diversity of the issue, or its people whose habits may differ from the city of Muscat and other

rural areas when devising policies due to its lack of engagement and inclusion, reducing the people as a homogenous entity to be steered. Engagement is an imperative success factor, understanding the people and communicating either through religious mediums or tribal sheikhs allows for dialogue and inclusion which is a main component to development.

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter 5 resolves to answer the second half of the research question pointing to policy development. Section 5.2 presents the challenges relating to participation, communication, transparency, and accountability as a result of weak institutional frameworks constituted by a political system enforced by systemic imperatives to maintain rentier economic structures. As well, this shows that the existing mode of top-down governance, propped by oil rents is slowly losing power. The case study presented above disclose how fragmented and disconnected the regime are within its own structure and its people with minimal effort to bridge the divide. The governments concern with maintaining the status quo is led by the same existing and outdated efforts that seek short-term financial stability for political authority. 5.1 discusses associations relationship with the regime in 'Big D' development of Vision 2040 program, what is observed is that while all associations have made an impact in the state regarding waste pollution, from a behavioural, capacity, project, or infrastructural level, only the registered ENGO was engaged in consultation. Waste is a diverse issue that cannot be tackled in a linear way, the restrictions on associations in 3.2 hamper concerted efforts in transforming waste to resource through its exclusionary protocols of participation.

However, the construed efforts of wielding power at the expense of political liberalization while attempting to develop the country into a modern state is counterproductive. The PBB policy showcased how the absence of associations who, from previous chapters, demonstrate two-way engagement, innovation, representation, and expertise in the issue of waste, resulted in the creation of fragmented policy. This displays how the political systems' exclusionary processes hinder diversified development efforts in public policy. Because development strategies are centred around an exported commodity, it leaves little room for resource investment in other key areas, draining realistic economic diversification and the potential for economic profitability.

Chapter 6 Conclusion & Recommendations

The study has examined the participatory prospects and constraints of civil society associations in policy development in Oman. This chapter will summarise findings along with reflections.

By incorporating selected theories on civil society organisation, development, rentier state, and civic driven change in the Omani context, I have discovered the following:

Obvious barriers to associations effectiveness in policy development are the laws and regulations surrounding associations, and the political structures that prevent participatory governance. However, the study has evidenced that associations have found ways around these obstacles either through external factors such as utilizing the rising importance of climate change, or internal such as their material impact on the environment. Associations are identified as representatives of civil society and hold a variance of overlapping functions as those found in democracies, though their contribution toward development differs to some degree. The regulations surrounding associations, may not detract from its energy to tackle the waste issue, but are an indication of their limited agency. In order to overcome this challenge, associations recognize that working with the government to create change is more effective than working against it, which also includes a relationship of enablement highlighting the power imbalance in favour of the state. This raises the unanswered question of co-optation. While the authoritarian political system of top-down governance shows a fractional shift from its traditional methods by consulting an organization on environmental matters on state programs, we cannot decipher whether the governments recognition of their contributions is ascribed to its formal status as a registered organisation, or the level of social capital held. We maintain that irrespective of the aforementioned factors each association has, to a degree, attributed their success in creating socio-environmental impact partly to the passive support of the government, and partly to their methods. The study therefore evidence's that associations have the tools to be effective, but they are hindered not by the mentioned barriers, but in their approach to influencing top-bottom change.

In order for associations to be effective in impacting public policy, a separation between regime and state must be recognized. While the government work toward attaining the states' nationally determined goals, the regime are the actors who influence how these goals are attained i.e., the processes and forces. While the activities of organisations in combating waste pollution have been effective in bottom-up transformations, they are limited in impacting top-bottom change therefore, to influence state policy associations must identify and appeal to the needs of the regime. The absence of formal participatory mechanisms delineates the regimes position on participatory governance, if a more cohesive policy on waste is to be created the narrative on the issue needs to be reframed. The state's efforts in achieving its sustainability targets have proven to be symbolic, nevertheless any attempts raise the countries profile on the global stage which make them attractive for funding. Sustainable projects and programs are suggested to have a positive correlation with foreign investments. The regimes legitimacy rests on meeting welfare requirements, since the oil price crash the main priority has been the accumulation of capital to fund the needs of the people. Part of these needs, voiced during the Arab Spring, was the call to curb unemployment rates. Not only

will funding fuel the economy, but the sustainability agenda opens new opportunities. The intersectionality of reputation, profit and meeting people's requirements are apparent therefore, the waste problem must become part of the strategic solution to the fundamental challenges faced by the regime.

Reputation: While climate efforts have been proven to be symbolic, they have made concrete strides in the energy sector due to the resources the industry possesses. The sustainable transition has been the main accolade of the country on the international stage. While other sectors are second to energy, waste is low hanging fruit and bears ripe opportunity. It does not require the same prodigal investments as energy, and because the industry is at foetal stages, it can set an example of how to build a successful industry built on sustainability. Associations have showcased how local and international partnerships can use existing resources to produce positive results, regime support coupled with associations expertise and reach can produce a partnership that scales up innovation with low fiscal risk and substantial reward.

Profitability: While the oil price crash has reprioritized other sectors, the financial strain on meeting welfare needs has created a wider deficit, therefore the main priority of the regime is financial profit. While waste is regarded as an expense, its economic profitability can yield a high potential for financial revenue. Innovative projects by associations are inherent with Vision 2040s objective of achieving a circular economy. Because waste touches on the social, economic, and environmental aspects, it is inclusive of all disciplines. The unrecognised industry is a budding sector for entrepreneurs, but also to exercise individual agency and creativity, allowing people to materially contribute to the development of their nation, while relieving the state of this responsibility and reducing the sectors financial dependence on the state.

Importance: The major success of associations is their urgent message on the critical importance of climate and the environment. Campaigns and programs may target general society but focus on the youth which make up the majority of the population. As evidenced in the youth led the Arab Spring, the power wielded by the people transgress the regime. The youth are increasingly indirectly participating in politics through social media. While the government may not recognize the value of the medium in gauging sentiments of the governed, associations have exploited the opportunity to engage with society, spouting the message of environmental protection, the importance of climate change while inferring the fallacies of government on the issue. The absence of a feedback mechanism, slow response of the regime to waste problems, and minimal representation has empowered the people, the growing number of diverse environmental associations is evidence. As the significance of environmental issues take root, the regimes position of profit over environment which run counter to its NDCs may be questioned. While top-down governance prevails, the bottom up has growing influence over the direction of the state; it is the people who legitimize the regimes authority.

The issue of policy development in relation to the participation of civil society associations highlights structural challenges that are rooted in the states foundation which require further research and study. The lack of response from governmental entities has refrained a more conclusive study on the issues addressed, leaving heavy reliance on the private sector and civil society agencies. As well, the lack of data and interviews with households and a more nuanced approach on demographics of Oman which could lead to some interesting

insights withhold a more balanced argument. The absence of studies regarding [environmental] associations in Oman created a dependence on external literature, but also highlights the lack of importance contributed to state development which must be discovered further.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Law on Associations

Source ICNL (2000)

Article 5	Associations shall not be allowed to interfere in politics, to form political parties or to interfere in religious issues. They shall stay away of tribal and political sects. They shall not practice the following: 1. Any activity other than that specified in their basic law; 2. They shall not participate or join an association, commission or club based outside the country without the prior approval of the Minister; 3. Hold public festivals or public lectures without obtaining a prior permission from the Ministry; 4. Allow gambling or alcohol in their premises.
Article 11	The Ministry shall have the right to refrain from registering any society if it deems that the society does not need its services or in case there are other associations fulfilling the needs of the society with regard to the requested activity of the association. It may refrain from registering an association in case its registration violates the security of the state or its welfare or for any other reasons according to the decision of the Ministry. The applicant shall be notified by registered mail of the denial decision. The decision shall be justified and those affected by the decision shall have the right to complain to the Minister for one month as of the date of receiving the denial notification referred to above. The decision of the Minister shall be considered as final.
Article 14	No branches shall be established, and the location of the association shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Minister. The request to open branches or to change the premises shall be submitted to the Ministry at least 30 days prior to any action.
Article 15	The association shall keep the following records and books: 1. A register of the names of members and their membership fees 2. Minutes of meetings of the board of directors and the general assembly 3. Accounting books recording the income and the costs and donations together with supporting documents. 4. Any other books or registers the Ministry deems necessary to be kept at the premises of the association.
Article 17	The associations shall be under the supervision of the Ministry. This supervision includes monitoring the activities of the association and ensuring their compliance with the laws, bylaws of the association and the decisions of the general assembly. The supervision shall be made by investigators to be assigned by the Minister for this purpose. They shall have the right to enter the premises of the association and to examine their registers, books, documents, and correspondences.

Article 23	The Minister shall be informed of each meeting of the general assembly at least 15 days prior to the meeting by a written notification to be sent to the Minister together with the agenda of the meeting and related papers and documents. The Ministry may assign whoever it deems necessary to attend the meeting.
Article 33	The Minister shall have the right to annul the decisions of a board meeting if the meetings convene in violation to this law or the bylaws of the association. He may annul a decision issued by the board in case this decision is controversial without annulling the remaining decisions. In this case, other decisions remain valid. The board of directors shall be informed of the decision within a period of maximum one month as of the date of notifying the Ministry with the minutes of meetings of the board and the decisions issued at the meeting. Otherwise, the meeting and its decisions shall be valid.
Article 37	The finances of the association consist of: 1. Membership fees 2. Donations, grants, and endowments (with the prior approval of the Minister) 3. Money collected from activities. 4. Government donations 5. Other revenues (with the prior approval of the Minister)
Article 42	No association shall be allowed to receive funds from a foreign person or a foreign foundation. It may not transfer funds to a foreign person or foundation without the prior approval of the Minister with the exception of amounts to pay the prices of equipment and tools necessary for the association to practice its activities and the prices of books and printed material on the condition that these materials comply to the publications law.
Article 46	The Minister may decide to merge one association or more working in the same field of activity in one association in order to coordinate services provided by these associations or for any other reasons the Minister sees as achieving the purpose of the association. The Minister shall issue a justified decision of merging specifying the procedures for merging. He shall notify the concerned association with the merging decision when such decision is issued.
Article 47	The association may be dissolved by a justified decision to be taken by the Minister in the following cases: 1. If it proves unable to achieve the purposes and aims, it was established to achieve. 2. If it spends it funds for reasons other than those specified in its aims. 3. If the general assembly does not convene for two consecutive years. 4. If the association commits a huge violation to this law, or its regulations or if it violates the public order and norms. The association shall be notified of the dissolving decision in writing. The decision shall be published in the official gazette.

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