

4Seas Localization Strategy Report

Since 2023, the 4Seas community has been exploring its identity and role within the broader crypto ecosystem and ongoing global technological transformation. Over the past two years, through a series of experiments, gatherings, and community activities centered around its physical spaces in Chiang Mai, what began as a loosely organized network has gradually evolved into a vibrant and somewhat chaotic community space—one that hosts events, conversations, and collaborations among builders, researchers, artists, and technologists. Through this process, 4Seas has slowly found its cadence: the community has grown more active, the spaces have become gathering points for diverse experiments, and a distinctive atmosphere has emerged—informal, open-ended, and organically evolving.

At the same time, this evolution has surfaced a deeper strategic question. Early discussions about establishing a 4Seas foundation revealed that before designing any formal institution, there were still fundamental questions to answer about what such a structure would serve, and who it would ultimately be for. These conversations made clear that localization is not a secondary concern, but a central function of 4Seas' future development. **If 4Seas is to continue growing meaningfully, it must become more deeply embedded in the local context in which it operates.** While much of the crypto ecosystem is global and digital, meaningful social transformation ultimately requires rootedness—relationships with local communities, local institutions, and local forms of knowledge.

Seen in this light, the foundation is best understood not simply as a vehicle for formalizing existing activities, but as a potential infrastructure for experimentation: a structure that could support 4Seas in exploring new forms of social organization, governance, and community-building. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to clarify the broader context for 4Seas' localization journey and to help inform how future institutional structures, including a possible foundation, should be shaped.

This report, therefore, aims to examine these key questions:

- **Why is local grounding becoming important in a networked world?**
- **How are other communities approaching local integration?**
- **What role can 4Seas play in the changing world?**
- **What institutional structure can support this work?**

Methodology

This report is based on an exploratory research process conducted over the past two years, with a period of focused research between November 2025 and March 2026. During this time, multiple forms of inquiry were undertaken to understand the challenges and opportunities surrounding localization within globally connected communities. The research combined several approaches:

- **Community observations and participation:** Active engagement with a range of communities working in related domains, including cosmological networks, crypto and Web3 communities, and Chiang Mai-based local communities. These engagements

provided direct insights into how globally connected groups interact with local environments.

- **Events and gatherings organized within this project:** The project hosted five dedicated workshops and community gatherings in Chiang Mai. These sessions brought together participants from different backgrounds to discuss the current state of localization, share experiences, and explore challenges faced by globally oriented communities seeking to integrate with local contexts.

Between January and February 2026, we convened **42 participants** across three distinct workshops:

- **Overseas Chinese in Chiang Mai Workshop** (閉門場, January 8)
 - **Tracing the Past and Future(s) of Chinese Diaspora Communities and Thailand** (January 9)
 - **4Seas <> Zuzalu Meeting with Vitalik** (January 26)
 - **Localising Crypto in Chiang Mai** (January 29)
 - **Cosmo-Local Relationships in Chiang Mai (Thai communities)** (February 28)
- **Expert interviews:** Throughout the research period, interviews were conducted with a range of individuals, including fund experts, cosmological thinkers, and practitioners working in related ecosystems. These conversations helped surface broader perspectives on community building, decentralized infrastructure, and local integration.
 - **Literature review:** Relevant publications and research materials were reviewed, particularly in areas related to Zuzalu experiments, cosmologicalism, and emerging models of networked communities.

Section A - Where are we in the world?

The presence of 4Seas is not a coincidence; it is the outcome of multiple overlapping layers of global transformation. We live in a world shaped by complex challenges with no single cause or solution—what complexity scholar Naresh Singh describes as [wicked problems](#). These include issues such as climate change, inequality, and social fragmentation, which often worsen despite attempts to address them, as interventions in one area can unintentionally intensify problems in another.

These challenges are not isolated. They intertwine, forming what is increasingly described as a *polycrisis*—a condition in which multiple systems are in simultaneous distress, interacting in non-linear, emergent, and unpredictable ways. At the same time, we are also facing an internal, psychological, and spiritual dimension of crisis, reflecting a deeper fragmentation in human consciousness and a growing disconnection from self, others, and nature. This underlying condition is often referred to as the *metacrisis*.

Together, these layers suggest that our current predicament cannot be understood or addressed through isolated solutions. What we are facing is a multi-layered condition that calls for equally integrated responses. In this section, we explore several of these wicked

problems, alongside emerging responses that have contributed to the conditions from which 4Seas has emerged.

The Wicked Problems

We do not attempt to match each wicked problem with a specific response, as these challenges are deeply intertwined and cannot be addressed through linear cause-and-effect solutions. Instead, each subsection explores a particular problem or emerging response and reflects on how it relates to the existence and development of 4Seas.

Wicked Problem 1: Tech-Enabled Centralization of Power

Where the early internet expressed freedom, liberty, and democratization, our socio-technical systems today have failed to deliver. Privacy violations, attention hacking, surveillance, algorithmic bias, disinformation, and excessive resource consumption are not bugs—they are systemic features of centralized control shared between big tech and governments.

Tim Wu's *Master Switch* thesis demonstrates that throughout the 20th century, technologies that began decentralized—telegraph, radio, film, television—eventually became centralized and captured by market forces and state power, following a predictable cycle. Each time, a new medium emerges in decentralized form, only to be captured again. Written in 2005 at a time when optimism that Internet would lead to an open media era, before Web3 and blockchain. Today we know that the Internet (Web2) failed to break the master switch of control. Web3 faces the same "invisible forces" driving toward centralization.

Shoshana Zuboff's *surveillance capitalism* framework reveals how internet companies like Google and Facebook made surveillance their business model, tracking personal data to sell advertising and train AI models. This created the "attention economy" where users become subjects of emotional and information warfare designed to capture their focus.

In China, Rebecca MacKinnon theorized *networked authoritarianism* in 2010: internet companies and the state align, with companies "outsourcing" censorship in exchange for favorable regulations and market monopoly. Twenty years later, this pattern has globalized. The ad-driven, techno-feudalistic behavior of tech companies is now deeply established across democratic and authoritarian contexts alike.

Kate Crawford and others have documented the extractive nature of AI—not just in data but in water, minerals, and energy consumption. Thomas Mullaney has shown how Silicon Valley-led technophilia often produces harmful effects despite utopian rhetoric.

Connection to 4Seas: If centralization is the gravitational force pulling all digital infrastructure toward state-market capture, then projects like 4Seas represent attempts at escape velocity—creating physical nodes where decentralized alternatives can be experimented with, protected, and sustained. But the working thesis is that this requires more than technology; it requires *local grounding and social coordination* to resist capture.

Wicked Problem 2: Collapse of Health

Digital connection, human disconnection. While our lives are more digitally networked than ever, the overwhelming reality is loneliness. Depression and mental health crises have risen globally. In China, this manifested as *tang ping* (躺平, "lying flat") and evolved into *neijuan* (内卷, "involution"—a state of exhausting, meaningless competition). In the United States and elsewhere, it has been recognized as a "loneliness pandemic." 13 million Thai adults have reported to experience mental health issues with the most affected group being younger adults between 19 and 29¹. Globally there is a documented rise in chronic diseases, obesity, and allergies, which is being linked to poor quality modern diets and lifestyles that are gradually changing the body's microbiome and immune system resilience².

The emerging field of *planetary health* examines health through the relationship between self, community, and planet. This lens reveals what individual-focused medicine misses: relationships with community and social ties are as important to health outcomes as individual biology. A study from Harvard shows that social ties and quality of relationships is the biggest indicator of longevity and wellbeing³.

Connection to 4Seas: If loneliness and disconnection are outcomes of digitalization without community, then physical gathering spaces become critical infrastructure for human health. However, if these spaces function as isolated bubbles—rather than being embedded within local ecosystems and contributing to community wellbeing—they risk reproducing and even amplifying the very problems they seek to address. This underscores why 4Seas' current mode of casual experimentation must evolve toward deeper local integration.

Wicked Problem 3: Displacement, Nomadism, and the Nation-State System

Two forms of rootlessness. As of mid-2025, approximately 117.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, violence, and human rights violations (UNHCR). At the same time, following COVID-19, an estimated 50 million people work remotely without being tied to a fixed physical location. These two trends—forced displacement and voluntary mobility—reshape how individuals relate to geography, citizenship, and belonging.

The nation-state system, while providing protection, stability, and governance, increasingly strains the balance between security and freedom. People worldwide experience state power differently: surveillance and restrictive regulations in some contexts, taxation and bureaucratic friction in others, geopolitical conflict limiting mobility and opportunity everywhere.

Against this backdrop, movements like network states, Zuzalu, and broader network-nation experiments emerge partly as responses to nation-state tensions. When neither forced displacement nor voluntary nomadism offers true belonging, the need for *stable nodes*—places offering continuity, community, and experimentation—becomes pronounced.

¹ https://ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/608-ThaiHealth2025-ENG_Indicators.pdf

² <https://www.noemamag.com/modernity-has-made-us-allergic/>

³ <https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/the-importance-of-connections-ways-to-live-a-longer-healthier-life/>

Connection to 4Seas: Both displaced communities and digital nomads need anchor points that offer grounded community alongside freedom of movement. But creating such nodes raises difficult questions: How does a non-local community (like 4Seas, predominantly Chinese founders) establish legitimate presence in a place (Chiang Mai, Thailand) without replicating colonial or extractive patterns? This tension drives the question of what *local grounding* means for globally mobile communities.

The Thread Connecting These Crises

These three wicked problems converge around a shared insight: technology alone cannot solve problems rooted in social disconnection and systemic forces.

- Tech centralization demonstrates that digital infrastructure inevitably gets captured by state and market forces due to business models and states need for control.
- Holistic health collapse reveals that without place-based relationships and ecosystems, individuals cannot sustain wellbeing.
- Displacement and nomadism show that without rootedness, even freely mobile people experience profound alienation and vulnerability to state/market control.

The implication: meaningful social transformation requires physical presence, local relationships, and community embeddedness—exactly what the crypto ecosystem, with its digital-first orientation, has historically undervalued.

Before examining responses to the wicked problem, there is question: should we speed up or slow down change?" There are currently three positions:

- **e/acc (unrestricted): Remove barriers, tech solves everything**
e/acc (effective acceleration) is a techno-optimistic philosophy advocating for the rapid, unhindered development of technology—particularly Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)—to solve humanity's greatest challenges and advance civilization. It argues that accelerating technological progress is a moral imperative, opposing efforts to slow AI development.
- **d/acc (differential): Accelerate SOME things (defensive/democratic), refuse others (extractive)**
[d/acc \(decentralized and democratic differential defensive acceleration\)](#) was coined by Vitalik Buterin, a form of techno-optimism that supports technological progress while directing it toward resilience and empowerment rather than domination. As Vitalik describes it, the goal is to accelerate technologies that strengthen people's ability to defend themselves—socially, economically, and technologically—while avoiding systems that concentrate power in the hands of a single authority. In his words, d/acc promotes technologies that are "*decentralized and democratic... focusing on technologies that improve our ability to defend rather than our ability to cause harm, and that distribute power rather than concentrating it in the hands of a singular elite.*" The model of defense envisioned here resembles decentralized forms of resilience found in places such as democratic Switzerland or historically autonomous frontier societies, rather than hierarchical systems like medieval feudal

castles controlled by centralized authorities.

- **re/acc (differential): Accelerate SOME things (regenerative), refuse others (extractive)**

re/acc (regenerative acceleration) is an approach that seeks to redirect the accelerating forces of capitalism and technology toward building regenerative, life-supporting systems rather than extractive ones. Instead of trying to reform or resist the current system, it focuses on creating alternative economic, social, and technological infrastructures that re-embed value in relationships, communities, and ecosystems. These systems are designed to scale through positive feedback loops—where each new participant strengthens the network and makes it easier for others to join. In this sense, re/acc is not just about regeneration, but about structuring regenerative practices so they can grow, replicate, and eventually outcompete extractive systems.

These three positions can be observed across different responses to wicked problems, each reflecting a distinct perspective on the relationship between humans and technology.

Responses to the Wicked Problems

As we examine various responses to these wicked problems, two questions help distinguish approaches:

1. **Local grounding:** Is it place-based and embedded, or mobile and extractive? Does it engage local legitimacy or bypass it?
2. **Economic foundation:** Does it rely on market mechanisms, commons governance, or hybrid models? Who captures value?

These questions matter because they determine whether a response addresses root causes (centralization, disconnection, displacement) or merely relocates them.

Eco-villages & Back to the Land

Before examining crypto's recent responses to wicked problems, it's important to recognize that movements attempting to "exit" the system and create alternate or parallel societies are not new, outside of the capitalist and state structures.

Beginning in the 1970s, ecovillages emerged as consciously and collectively designed **community**, where individuals come together to create a home with a shared vision⁴. Examples like Auroville a Township for 3,000+ people from 60+ nation, one of the largest successful examples of an intentional community with recognition from the state, exercising some self-governance around property, and education, among other areas. The ecovillage movement has experienced notable resurgence in recent years. The Global Ecovillage Network added 252 new communities in 2024 alone, bringing its network to over 6,000 communities across 114 countries. After three decades of experimentation, the movement

⁴ <https://gen-europe.org/discover/about-ecovillages/>

has matured from counterculture fringe to UN-recognized climate infrastructure, with recent advocacy calling for mainstream policy integration at COP30 (2025)."

In the US, the "back to the land" movement in 1970s, thousands of young Americans left cities to establish rural communes, attempting to create self-sufficient communities based on shared resources, manual labor, and rejection of consumer capitalism. Rajneeshpuram, setup by Osho and his followers, was an intentional community in Oregon that built its own airport and city infrastructure. These movements eventually failed, either due to the lack of skills needed to manage coordination, or in the case of Rajneeshpuram, conflict with surrounding county governments and clash of values.

The movement's evolution from counterculture to potential mainstream climate infrastructure parallels crypto's own ground-turn: recognition that digital-only solutions prove insufficient, and that physical community embedding matters. Ecovillages demonstrate that alternative community models can persist and grow over decades—but also reveal persistent challenges around economic sustainability, governance, and relationship with state systems that crypto communities now face.

From Cloud to Ground: Zuzalu

By the early 2020s, a shift occurred. **Vitalik Buterin posed a provocative question:** "What if cultures or tribes that have formed online with their own goals and values could materialize offline, and new physical places could grow due to intention rather than random chance?"

His answer was Zuzalu (2023): a two-month "pop-up city" where 200+ people co-lived and co-worked in Montenegro, experimenting with crypto infrastructure in an embodied community. This represented a significant pivot: **recognition that despite crypto's digital nature, physical spaces and in-person gatherings remained essential.** Leading Web3 thinkers recognized that "counterintuitively, the original cypherpunk vision of credible non-state institutions may survive only through contact with cultures more full-blooded than crypto itself." Digital infrastructure needs cultural and ecological embedding to avoid becoming another extractive system. The next phase of growth would come from organizing offline, not just online.

Zuzalu went on to inspire a movement of pop-up cities and communities to organise offline and by this metric continues to be a success. A focus on health and well-being, and a sense of belonging and community, became major reasons its success. A space for people to experiment with biotech and longevity, to take ice baths, go for hikes and walks, and prioritise connection without digital devices. At Edge City Lanna, the Nature and Health Node, brought together public health professionals working on blockchain and Network Nation projects⁵.

The primary challenge lay around localisations. Many Zuzalu-style initiatives still operate primarily through temporary gatherings, where organizers and participants migrate across countries following what resembles a "crypto conference nomadic route." In this pattern, the same group of globally mobile participants repeatedly meets in different locations, often

⁵ <https://www.planethealth.club/>

limiting engagement with the surrounding communities. Although these gatherings can spark new ideas and collaborations, their short-term nature makes it difficult to sustain local relationships or support the longer-term development of initiatives that emerge from them.

For both Ethereum as a digital ecosystem and Zuzalu as a physical community experiment, meaningful impact increasingly depends on deeper forms of local engagement. Localization involves more than simply hosting events in different places; it requires understanding local challenges, building relationships with local actors, and engaging with the social and cultural dynamics of a specific place.

Network State Memetic Wave

Around 2021, Balaji Srinivasan introduced the concept of the *Network State*, defined as “a highly aligned online community with a capacity for collective action that crowdfunds territory around the world and eventually gains diplomatic recognition from pre-existing states.” His key contribution was transforming the idea of networked societies from academic theory into a global meme, mobilizing resources and catalyzing real-world experiments. This includes initiatives such as the 2023 Network State Summit and Network School, alongside a growing ecosystem of over 100 “startup societies” worldwide.

The Network State vision has gained significant traction within crypto communities, particularly among Western actors attracted by the promise of “exiting” failing nation-states and building autonomous territories. Its approach to localization largely bypasses integration with existing local contexts, instead favoring land acquisition and jurisdictional innovation. This logic echoes earlier models such as Special Economic Zones (SEZs), where private capital leverages legal frameworks to create semi-autonomous, extraterritorial enclaves.

At its core, the Network State framework reflects Silicon Valley startup logic applied to governance. It emphasizes founders, singular ideological alignment (“One Commandment”), and rapid scaling, with limited attention to commons or public goods. While it brings important strengths—such as resource mobilization, coordination capacity, and a clear critique of failing institutions—it raises critical questions about whether it truly transcends the state–market nexus or simply reproduces it in new forms.

Examples such as Próspera in Honduras or Network School suggest that these models can replicate patterns historically associated with tax havens, elite enclaves, and extractive hierarchies. As Glen Weyl notes, such approaches risk using crypto to evade accountability while reconstructing techno-feudal dynamics. There are even parallels to earlier forms of chartered corporate governance, where sovereignty becomes entangled with capital interests rather than redistributed.

[In conversation with Vitalik Buterin \(March 12\)](#), he highlighted a key structural limitation: most Network State initiatives struggle to achieve autonomy beyond the city level, remaining dependent on existing state infrastructure and legal systems. As a result, attempts to “exit” conventional politics often lead back to negotiation with the very authorities they seek to bypass. Recognizing these constraints, many projects are now shifting toward identifying more cooperative jurisdictions and developing multi-location strategies to maintain optionality.

Networked Nations: a commons alternative

Parallel to Network States, another movement emerged: **Networked Nations** (or Co-ordi-Nations), led by legal scholars and early Ethereum members including Primavera De Filippi. De Filippi defines Networked Nations as "translocal communities that exercise functional sovereignty—the capacity to govern their own affairs with meaningful autonomy across borders."

Key distinctions from Network States:

- Infrastructure "remains accountable to communities rather than shareholders"
- Resources treated as "commons rather than commodities"
- Positioned as complementary to territorial states, not competing for replacement or recognition
- Addresses needs "traditional nation-state governments are unable to provide"

The innovation: Rather than supplanting states, Networked Nations seek functional sovereignty in domains where states fail or don't operate—mutual aid, transnational coordination, digital identity, cultural preservation⁶.

Cosmolocalism: A Third Way Beyond State and Market

In a time of peak globalisation, with global supply chains and international trade, and digital economies the hallmark of the modern economy, cosmo-localism is a reminder of the 'local' and the need to integrate global connectivity with local economies. The need for local coordination of food, manufacturing, health, which is central towards creating systems of organising outside of the market and state. Thinkers like Michel Bauwens expanded this framework to include decentralized networks and cryptocurrencies as coordination technologies enabling translocal collaboration and resource flows.

Cosmolocalism emerged from commons-based peer production experiments, particularly the "design global, manufacture local" principle enabled by 3D printing, open-source hardware, and peer-to-peer networks. In this model, knowledge, design, and coordination circulate globally through digital commons, while material production and stewardship remain rooted in local communities.

The commons as institutional foundation. Central to cosmolocalism is reviving the commons—shared resources governed collectively—as alternative to both state redistribution and market commodification. Japanese philosopher Kojin Karatani described historical social organization through "modes of exchange":

- **Mode A:** Reciprocity and gift exchange
- **Mode B:** State redistribution (taxation, protection)
- **Mode C:** Market exchange (commodification)
- **Mode D:** An emerging form transcending and recombining earlier modes

⁶ <https://networknations.network/essay/>

Bauwens identifies Mode D with voluntary associations and shared commons. Cosmolocal networks become a practical pathway: global knowledge commons and cooperative infrastructures enable communities to coordinate production beyond state control and market extraction. This is not just a technological paradigm but a political-economic vision where interconnected commons networks form the backbone of regenerative, pluralistic global society. According to Michel, the challenge is to make "Crypto Real Again" by connecting "cosmo" (open-source developers) with "local initiators" to build cosmological technology stack—what Michel Bauwens calls the fundamental challenge to the "5,000-year-old geographic civilizational model."

Ethereum Localism: Grounding Cypherpunk in the local

In 2025, a movement emerged within the Ethereum community explicitly focused on "how Ethereum's decentralized infrastructure can strengthen local economies, governance systems, and social networks."⁷ It emerged as a Self-conscious response to longstanding criticism that Ethereum is "too abstract for local economies, fails to circulate locally, and largely lacks real-world applications."

Its foundation principles included cosmologicalism, on the need to ground the 'cosmo' networks in lived realities of local food and other communities. Offer decentralised alternatives to currency, identity, and resource coordination, that can be an option for many local communities that are already aware of the dangers of big tech but lack alternatives.

Ethereum Localism is still in its early stages, however it is intersecting with other place-based movements, most notably bioregionalism. One notable on-going project is the localism fund by Open Civics and Regen network, which is aiming to empower local communities with grant making capabilities with Ethereum as the primary coordination mechanism⁸.

4seas as a Response to Wicked Problems

The cloud-to-ground movement establishes the legitimacy of physical crypto spaces, but the current pop-up model—temporary, mobile, leaving before deep local relationships form—is precisely what 4Seas seeks to transcend through permanent presence.

4Seas' presence in Chiang Mai is a response to each of these Wicked problem.

What 4Seas Learned from Each Movement

In response to these wicked problems, 4Seas has taken a distinctive approach—learning from existing movements while adapting their insights into its own evolving practice.

- **From Cosmolocalism:** ✓ Global networks serve local communities ✓ Commons-based peer production ✓ Mode D beyond state/market → **4Seas operationalizes:** Theory becomes practice in Chiang Mai context

⁷ <https://www.ethereumlocalism.xyz/knowledge-garden/introduction>

⁸ <https://broadcast.opencivics.co/p/localism-fund-nurturing-self-organizing?r=es1n5>

- **From Ethereum Localism:** ✓ Ground decentralized tech in local economies ✓ Bioregional connections ✓ Public goods orientation → **4Seas pioneers:** Among first permanent nodes attempting this
- **From Zuzalu:** ✓ Physical presence matters ✓ Experimental energy ✓ Global network effects ✗ Pop-up temporality → **4Seas adapts:** Permanent node, not rotating venue
- **From Network State:** ✓ Ambition for autonomous coordination ✓ Resource mobilization capacity ✗ Exit/bypass logic (SEZ colonialism) ✗ Founder-centric market ideology ✗ Techno-feudalism risk → **4Seas rejects:** The entire SEZ model and its colonial DNA

4Seas' differentiation: Not seeking diplomatic recognition (Balaji's endgame) but **local legitimacy**. Not bypassing integration through capital but **earning integration through contribution**.

Zuzalu Evolution: 4Seas Pushing the Boundaries for Zuzalu

Zuzalu in spirit captures the zeitgeist of 4seas origins. From Vitalik's [reflections](#), connecting with local environments is not merely a moral aspiration but a practical necessity. Even highly digital communities remain deeply dependent on the infrastructure, legal systems, and social fabric of existing states. Meaningful engagement with local communities therefore becomes essential—not only to avoid the risks associated with enclave-style or neo-colonial projects, but also to transform temporary gatherings into lasting communities embedded in place.

In this context, Vitalik has increasingly encouraged **Zuzalu-inspired communities to establish permanent nodes**, an approach that resonates strongly with the broader vision of **cosmo-localism**, where globally connected networks are grounded in locally embedded communities. This is a model that 4seas can both learn from but and lead.

In his essay *“Let a Thousand Societies Bloom,”* Vitalik Buterin said he is encouraging pop-up cities to setup permanent nodes, as response to one of the key challenges that **‘Involving locals in a non-superficial way is hard’**. He referred to 4seas as an example of a permanent node, However even with such local nodes, Vitalik notes the fear of these permanent nodes losing their spirit of experimentation.

He proposes a framework of **tribes, hubs, and zones** to describe emerging forms of community and governance experimentation that can take the Zuzalu style popup cities into more permanent nodes that are more grounded in the local.

Tribes refer to value-aligned communities that share cultural practices, goals, and social norms, often formed across borders and connected through both online and offline interactions.

Hubs are the physical spaces where these tribes gather and live out their culture in practice—places that enable deeper collaboration, experimentation, and community life beyond temporary events.

Zones, meanwhile, are jurisdictions or special areas within existing states that allow experimentation with new governance models, regulations, or economic systems.

Together, tribes, hubs, and zones form an interconnected ecosystem that enables cultural, social, and institutional innovation without requiring a complete break from existing nation-state structures. Hubs provide the physical environments where these cultures can become embedded in everyday life. As Vitalik notes, *“it is a critical part of digital tribes to have long-lasting physical spaces. Physical spaces allow a culture’s values and habits to be instantiated in a much deeper way.”* In this sense, hubs function as spaces where communities can experiment with governance, culture, and social coordination beyond the limitations of short-term gatherings.

4Seas emerges at the intersection of multiple global crises—tech centralization, health collapse, displacement, financial instability—each of which reinforces the others. Historical attempts to create alternative communities (ecovillages, intentional communities) and contemporary responses (Zuzalu pop-ups, Network State exit logic, Cosmolocal theory, Ethereum Localism practice) offer valuable lessons but incomplete solutions. 4Seas synthesizes these approaches while attempting to transcend their limitations: permanent presence (not pop-up), local grounding (not extractive bubble), regenerative orientation (not startup profit logic), defensive infrastructure (not unrestricted acceleration).

The central test is whether globally mobile, digitally native, crypto-focused communities—especially those fleeing authoritarian contexts—can establish legitimate, generative local presence without replicating colonial or extractive patterns. This is not just 4Seas’ organizational challenge but a test case for whether crypto’s ground-turn can serve communities rather than just capital. The remainder of this report outlines how 4Seas can move from promising experiment to proven model through concrete governance, economic, and community development pathways—or where it might fail if current gaps remain unaddressed.

[If we want to expand this to a Whitepaper, we can add 4Seas’ crypto philosophies here]

Section B - 4Seas & Chiang Mai context and analyses

What is 4Seas Today

4Seas is a Zuzalu-inspired community in Chiang Mai, Thailand, that serves as a permanent node for the global Zuzalu movement and the only Ethereum cultural space in the city. Founded by a self-organized group of Chinese Ethereum supporters (Plancker), the group is dedicated to social change through the adoption of cypherpunk technology and decentralized governance. Their foundational values are rooted in a "sense of adversity" regarding the early promises of the internet in China. 4Seas aims to avoid these failures by creating a "sovereign stack" of technology and community infrastructure that remains accountable to its members rather than shareholders. 4Seas operates through two primary physical location ‘hubs’ in Chiang Mai.

The Nimman Urban Working Hub

Located in the city center, this space hosts community events, co-working, and housing. Operating at high intensity—approximately 30 events per month—Nimman serves as the accessible, public-facing node.

Mountain View (The Suburban Monastery)

Situated on the outskirts of Chiang Mai city by Doi Suthep mountain, this serves as a venue for seminars, research, and community living. If Nimman is the busy intersection, Mountain View is the contemplative retreat. Here, deeper work happens: sustained research projects, intimate gatherings, longer-term community building away from urban intensity.

Major Event Hosting:

- Provided space and funding for significant crypto gatherings: Wamo 2.0, Pagoda, Road to Devcon, Invisible Garden, Funding the Commons
- Lead organizer for ETH Chiang Mai (December 2025 - February 2026): a two-month flagship event establishing Chiang Mai as a serious node in the global Ethereum network.

Community Support Beyond Crypto:

- Disaster relief during Chiang Mai floods (2024): demonstrated commitment beyond ideological community to broader local needs
- Donations to Myanmar Civic Tech Hackathon and "Reimagine Myanmar" initiative: supporting regional digital defense

Technical Infrastructure Development:

- Funded development and cryptographic audit of networking stack enabling secure peer-to-peer communication in resource-constrained environments like Myanmar: moving from abstract values to concrete tools

Global Network Connections:

- Sponsoring Crecimiento movement in Argentina: demonstrating translocal practice—supporting similar experiments elsewhere while rooted in Chiang Mai

4Seas has become a convergence point for diverse communities:

Global Crypto Networks

- Ethereum and Zuzalu global community:
- Chinese Ethereum and other crypto communities e.g. Uncommons, GCC Public Goods Fund

Non-crypto Communities

- Chinese cultural communities (e.g., 706)

- Digital nomads
 - AI/tech-focused professionals
 - Longevity & biohacker communities
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4Seas in the Local

With the progress made in establishing a permanent node in Chiang Mai, 4Seas now seeks to deepen its role within its surrounding context. The hypothesis of this report is that, in order to localise in a foreign land, in non-colonial way, while maintaining a degree of political security unique to 4seas' context, 4Seas needs clarify what localization means in its context.

Localization for 4Seas operates along two dimensions. On one hand, it involves building meaningful relationships with local communities in Chiang Mai—engaging with existing social, cultural, and institutional ecosystems. On the other hand, it involves serving the needs of globally mobile communities, including digital nomads and translocal networks that visit Chiang Mai and form a core part of 4Seas' identity.

Positioned between the global and the local, 4Seas faces a fundamental question: how can it define its role in a way that meaningfully connects these two spheres? And how can localization strengthen its ability to serve its communities (“tribes”) while advancing its broader goals?

To do so, we must first understand the place in which 4Seas is attempting to localize: Chiang Mai, including the land's historical, political, and geographical background.

Chiang Mai Context

Chiang Mai, with a population of 1.6 million people, is Thailand's second most important city due to its strategic position in the Greater Mekong Subregion, a large number of universities, government offices, hospitals, local and international schools, and foreign representations⁹. Chiang Mai University is Thailand's 3rd largest university and acts as intellectual heartbeat of the city, together with a rich arts and craft culture. The region has been a centre for trade, commerce, religion, education, arts, crafts and culture for over 700 years. In 2010 Chiang Mai recently joined the UNESCO Creative City Network in the Crafts and Folk Arts Category.

In his article *“Let a Thousand Societies Bloom,”* Vitalik Buterin references Zomia as an example of the type of decentralized defense he envisions. Chiang Mai, as part of the broader Zomia region, reflects the significance of this historical and geographical context.

Anthropologist James C. Scott uses the term *Zomia* to describe the mountainous region spanning mainland Southeast Asia, home to hundreds of ethnic groups and multiple language families that resist simple classification¹⁰. Historically, Zomia existed at the margins of imperial and state control, located far from major centers of economic and political power and situated at the intersection of multiple cultural and political spheres.

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¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_Not_Being_Governed

Scott challenges the traditional narrative of “civilization,” arguing that many communities in this region may have intentionally adopted mobile settlement patterns, subsistence practices, and social structures that allowed them to preserve autonomy from state authority. In this view, what imperial narratives labeled as “barbarian” societies may in fact represent sophisticated strategies for maintaining independence.

Chiang Mai’s geographical significance not only provided natural barriers that limited state control, but also made it an important channel for merchants and cross-cultural exchange. This historical role can still be seen today in the presence of Burmese and Chinese communities in the region.

Chinese Communities in Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai’s relationship with China stretches back to its 1296 founding by King Mengrai, whose mother was a Tai Lue from Southern China; he originally established the city to create a link to the lucrative Silk Road¹¹. Early waves of migration consisted of Yunnanese caravan traders and later 20th-century labourers who eventually naturalized into the “Sino-Thai” (*Huaren*) identity, shifting the city’s economic power toward families like the Osthaphans who established massive rice mills and commercial ventures¹². This historical integration was so profound that today over two million Thai-Chinese people reside in Northern Thailand, having successfully blended Chinese traditions like the Vegetarian Festival into the local Lanna culture. The 1950s also saw a distinct influx of overland Yunnanese “Chin Ho” migrants, including former Kuomintang (KMT) soldiers who formed over 50 refugee villages along the border and eventually received Thai citizenship after assisting the government in combatting communist insurgencies¹³.

In contrast to this assimilated “old” diaspora, the “new Chinese migrants” (*xin yimin*) who arrived in the past 20-30 years. These are emigrants but still hold Chinese PRC passports and therefore hold a very different relationship with Thailand. This includes parents seeking high-quality international education for their children, artists, Web3 professionals, university students, and people across backgrounds seeking alternative lifestyles. Many of them can be seen as fleeing China due to crackdowns in freedom of speech or diminishing economic prospects or high pressure life styles in large urban cities. In China, the aftermath of Zero Covid pandemic restrictions and general economic pressure in major urban cities, many young Chinese are opting to “Run” away from the Mainland, with Chiang Mai a popular destination due to existing socio-economic links with Chinese communities, education opportunities, and digital nomad communities. Data shows that Chinese buyers have acquired over 1,000 properties worth 3 to 5 billion baht in Chiang Mai¹⁴ over the last decade.

¹¹ **Chiang Mai Founding and Moat Design:** Citylife, “History,” *Chiang Mai Citylife*, March 12, 2020

¹² **Early Yunnanese Caravan Traders (Ho/Chin Ho):** Liulan Wang, “Hui Yunnanese Migratory History in Relation to the Han Yunnanese and Ethnic Resurgence in Northern Thailand,” *Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University*, 2007, pp. 317–330.

¹³ **Kuomintang (KMT) Influx and Refugee Villages:** Wang, “Hui Yunnanese Migratory History,” pp. 333, 352

¹⁴ <https://www.nationthailand.com/thailand/economy/40025159>

Myanmar in Chiang Mai

There are 200,000 Burmese that live in Chiang Mai (officially reported) with the true figure potentially even higher due to the open border and the ongoing civil war in Myanmar. Chiang Mai has long served as a base for Burmese in exile, a coordination ground for activists, journalists, and others that are not able to function in Myanmar safely. Burmese also form a significant bulk of blue colour labour force across Thailand, especially performing jobs around construction and hospitality.

4Seas in Chiang Mai

The emergence of 4Seas in Chiang Mai also reflects two contemporary migration patterns shaping the city. First, it builds upon the long-standing presence of Chinese communities in Northern Thailand. While earlier waves of Chinese migration largely integrated into local society, recent decades have seen the arrival of new Chinese migrants seeking alternative lifestyles, educational opportunities, and greater political or social freedom outside mainland China. 4Seas can be understood as part of this broader post-COVID wave of migrants exiting the PRC due to political risks and a growing “sense of adversity” (忧患意识) regarding the trajectory of the early internet and digital governance in China.

Second, Chiang Mai has developed into one of the world’s major hubs for digital nomads and remote workers. Over the past decade, the city has attracted technologists, researchers, activists, and entrepreneurs who are able to work across borders through digital infrastructure. This environment has created a unique ecosystem where globally connected communities coexist with long-established local and diasporic networks.

In this sense, the 4Seas experiment in Chiang Mai sits at the intersection of these two dynamics: the historical presence of Chinese diasporic networks and the more recent rise of digitally networked global communities. Together, these conditions make Chiang Mai a particularly suitable site for exploring new forms of community organization and experimentation. From this perspective, 4Seas’ presence in Chiang Mai can be understood as an attempt to explore a contemporary form of differential defensive society, adapted to the conditions of the digital age.

Tensions

Having established the importance of localization for the long-term viability of 4Seas, this section examines several tensions identified throughout the research process. These tensions do not necessarily represent contradictions, but rather structural challenges that arise when globally networked communities attempt to embed themselves within specific local contexts. Understanding and navigating these dynamics will be essential for 4Seas as it develops from a transient gathering space into a more durable local node. The research highlights three key tensions and three internal contradictions:

- **Localization Challenge**
- **Balancing Exit and Engage**
- **Navigating Dual Suspicion: The Chinese–Crypto Problem in Thailand**

and three internal paradox:

- **transparency**
- **ideology**
- **leadership**

The following sections examine each of these in greater detail.

Tension One: The Localization Challenge

During a conversation with Vitalik in January 2026, he noted that the most successful localization efforts he has observed are typically those led by local people. This observation highlights a key challenge for globally networked communities: local knowledge and leadership are often essential for building lasting and legitimate initiatives.

This insight points directly to the structural dilemma facing 4Seas. The project sees itself as a long-term node for the Zuzulu movement in Chiang Mai and one of the few spaces in the city centered around Ethereum culture. If Ethereum aims to move beyond its current bubble—addressing real-world problems and onboarding broader communities—then such nodes must develop meaningful local connections. At the same time, many of the founders and core contributors of 4Seas come from China, where political and regulatory constraints have made experimentation around crypto and social innovation increasingly difficult. Chiang Mai therefore becomes an important space for exploration.

However, 4Seas is not a locally rooted organization in the traditional sense. Its core members are largely international, and their familiarity with Chiang Mai's social, cultural, and institutional landscape remains limited. This creates a structural tension: 4Seas is attempting to localize in a place that is not originally its own. This challenge is not unique to 4Seas—it is a broader condition shared by many displaced communities and globally mobile digital nomads seeking to establish long-term initiatives in unfamiliar environments.

For 4Seas, this tension is further shaped by its particular positioning as **a Chinese-founded, crypto-focused community operating in Thailand, dealt separately in tension 3**. This context introduces additional layers of complexity that influence how the project is perceived locally and internationally.

Tension Two: Balance between Exit and Engage

The balance between exit and engagement is not merely an ideological question in the context of 4Seas; it represents a practical dynamic that must be carefully managed for long-term development and security. On one hand, meaningful localization requires sustained investment in relationships with local communities in Chiang Mai. Building trust, collaborating with institutions, and contributing to the local ecosystem all require time, resources, and long-term commitment.

On the other hand, the broader geopolitical environment introduces uncertainties that make full reliance on local engagement alone insufficient.

As part of the "new" migrants of the 21st century, 4seas face a **powerful, authoritarian, and extraterritorial state** that enforces homogenization and discourages integration into Thai society.

Political shifts, regulatory changes, or external pressures could affect the viability of experimental communities operating at the intersection of crypto, technology, and social organization. For this reason, engagement must be balanced with the ability to maintain an exit option—a contingency that allows the community to adapt if local conditions change. In practice, this means developing backup plans and maintaining connections that could function as alternative bases or safety nets.

During our discussions, the idea emerged that the broader Zuzalu and Ethereum networks could function as part of this safety infrastructure. Rather than existing solely as a local initiative, 4Seas can remain deeply connected to global communities that share similar values and goals. This allows **the project to remain both globally networked and locally embedded**, reflecting the cosmo-local principle of being fully global and fully local at the same time. Through this balance, 4Seas can continue to experiment locally while maintaining the flexibility and resilience that come from belonging to a wider networked ecosystem.

Tension Three: Navigating Dual Suspicion - The Chinese-Crypto Problem in Thailand

Workshop feedbacks: Perceptions of 4Seas from Thai Communities

All workshop participants had heard of 4Seas, and several had visited 4Seas Nimman, yet significant confusion and doubt remained about who is behind it and where its funding comes from. This uncertainty sits at the heart of the core tension: a non-local community attempting to play a local role in a foreign city.

The Perception Spectrum

Perceptions ranged from well-meaning but culturally out-of-touch digital nomads to, at the more suspicious end, actors involved in money laundering or legally grey activities. Many of these views were shaped by local observation and word of mouth—including the widely-noted fact that the 4Seas Nimman complex is among the largest and most expensive spaces in the city.

The Source-of-Money Problem

Participants identified funding provenance as the primary risk for any local fund. Questions about whether money is connected to greenwashing, extractive industry, or worse would need to be answered credibly before local organizations could engage in good faith.

Underlying all of this is a "good guy problem" familiar in Thai philanthropic culture: community-facing initiatives are increasingly scrutinized as potential cover for less reputable

activity. Perceptions of 4Seas cannot be fully separated from broader perceptions of crypto and Chinese capital in Thailand—both of which carry significant baggage in the current moment.

The Chinese-Crypto Context in 2026 Thailand

To understand why these perceptions exist, it's important to recognize the specific context in which 4Seas operates.

PRC's Extraterritorial Reach

New migrants from China face pressure regarding what they can and cannot discuss, with the looming threat of the National Security Law and growing cross-border law enforcement cooperation—accelerated by the scam center industry—allowing the PRC to exercise greater extraterritorial oversight into Thailand.¹⁵

Political Pressure on Local Events & Self-censorship: The Chinese state uses its influence to block cultural or political events in Thailand—such as Taiwan-related festivals—that it deems sensitive, directly affecting the freedom of the local community. Wasana Wongsurawat shared with us directly from her own experience at Chulalongkorn University overseeing graduate thesis of Chinese students, she does not allow her students to write on political issues because even a university thesis can lead to imprisonment upon returning to China if it is deemed critical of the state.

Scam Center Suspicions

A significant concern raised by multiple participants in the Thai community workshop was that Chinese businesses are perceived as potentially connected to scam center money laundering operations. In the past year, scrutiny and media coverage have highlighted billions of dollars being laundered through Southeast Asian scam networks, raising Thai suspicions about Chinese businesses generally¹⁶. The fact that 4Seas is a crypto-linked organization adds to the suspicion due to crypto's role in money laundering. One participant disclosed that they had received independent warnings about 4Seas in this regard. While no evidence was provided, rumors spread easily in this context.

Chinese-Dominated Gentrification

The influx of Chinese migrants and capital inevitably impacts the local Chiang Mai economy given the economic disparity between the PRC and Thailand. Gentrification is a common global trend describing how capital influx leads to rising rents and prices. While some local business owners may benefit directly, the majority lose out—especially since local perceptions suggest money often flows to foreign-owned businesses or Bangkok-owned enterprises rather than staying with local Chiang Mai residents.

A concern emerged that wealthy incoming communities tend toward self-isolation rather than integration. As one participant put it, new arrivals often gravitate toward exclusive enclaves

¹⁵ https://en.spp.gov.cn/2025-03/11/c_1077784.htm

¹⁶ <https://asiatimes.com/2026/01/scam-centers-behind-thailands-strangely-strong-baht/>

of people like themselves, inadvertently alienating locals with no real intention to assimilate. Without active local engagement, the relationship with Chiang Mai risks becoming purely extractive—contradicting the very values these communities claim to hold, but in ways they may not even recognize.

Today, these communities often function as "parallel societies," self-isolating into WeChat-based parent groups or Chinese Christian churches that sidestep the need for local interaction¹⁷. 4Seas may believe their presence in Chiang Mai brings significant capital into Thailand, and that providing free use of space adds further benefit to the city. However, perceptions may run counter to this. Questions remain about how much money spent translates to profit for local people, and whether the space is truly accessible to local Thai communities.

Three Core Paradox 矛盾

1. The Transparency Dilemma

Despite 4Seas' cypherpunk values, locals read the lack of transparency around its identity, origins, and funding as a red flag—particularly given crypto's association with scam networks and Chinese capital in the Thai context. As one participant put it, 4Seas may be seen as "a bunch of nerds" who want to work with locals but "don't know how."

This dilemma runs deep and has no clean solution. Full transparency opens founders to personal security risks in China, where crypto activities and politically motivated forms of social organizing can lead to serious consequences. But zero transparency opens 4Seas to suspicion among locals in Thailand due to its crypto-Chinese identity.

4seas cannot talk about transparency and openness but act in contradiction to this. Finding a balance of local transparency is necessary to be accepted locally,

2. Ideology vs. Local Thai Culture & Lived Reality

Cypherpunk ideals—including indifference to state legitimacy and emphasis on individual sovereignty—sit uneasily with the realities of local economies, governance, and culture.

What reads as freedom and principled resistance to locals can look like evasion or disregard to local communities who navigate state systems daily. How much of cypherpunk values or longevity values resonate with local culture in a Buddhist nation where heavy individuation and focus on the body is not the primary worldview?

Several participants noted a pattern in which foreign actors treat Thailand as a testing ground for ideas that would be impossible or unwelcome at home—raising questions about whose vision of change is actually being served. Are these experiments genuinely designed to benefit local communities, or are they primarily serving the needs and ideologies of those who cannot pursue them in their home countries? Is 4seas open to taking on board the values of local people that may not be explicitly Cypherpunk?

These are contradictions that need to be addressed as part of 4seas deepening localisation in Chiang Mai.

3. Integration Without Assimilation

4Seas founders face a genuine personal context that inevitably will influence the quality and depth of 4seas localisation effort.

How interested are the founders in deep integration into Thai society and culture on a personal level. For instance, interest in learning Thai to a semi-fluent level, interest in Thai Lanna culture, Buddhism, and Thai cultural norms. In so far as the founders express a very low interest in dedicating their own time to such endeavours, then 4seas will lack the energy and potential that can be unlocked from some relationships. Even finding trusted local collaborators that can represent 4seas values is challenging.

The Stakes

These tensions and contradictions are critical and need to be addressed actively and will not easily ease themselves out of the picture.

Without engagement, negative perceptions risk creating backlash that may force 4Seas into a corner—either through regulatory action, community resistance, or reputational damage that makes collaboration even more difficult.

Ironically, 4Seas' success in the past year draws more attention from all eyes—making these issues more urgent, not less. As the space grows, hosts larger events, and becomes more visible in Chiang Mai, scrutiny will only increase. The current moment offers a window to address these tensions proactively before they lead to pushback.

Section C - Proposed Strategic Direction: Defensive Networked Society

In Section A we laid out the variety of “cloud to ground” movements that are intersecting and motivating 4seas’ own path, notably Zuzalu, d/acc, cosmo-localism, networked state & network nations, ethereum localism. In Section B described 4seas existing positioning and the tensions it has to navigate. In this section we describe a theoretical strategy that synthesises some key elements from these “cloud to ground” movements that we think are most relevant to 4seas own development and localisation potential, which chose to call “Defensive Networked Society”.

4Seas can currently be understood as **a tribe that has established a hub**, while also exploring the possibility of evolving toward a **zone**.

The transition from hub to zone represents a deeper level of integration with the surrounding city and institutions, potentially approaching forms of city-level experimentation or partial

autonomy. Importantly, these trajectories are not mutually exclusive. A hub can simultaneously pursue two strategic directions: **deeper integration with existing institutions and the development of greater autonomy through networked and local systems**.

Building on this framing, the strategy of Defensive Networked proposes several complementary layers of defense that enable communities to remain resilient under uncertain political, technological, and social conditions.

Each layer of defense operates across three levels—self, community, and environment (Chiang Mai as a city)—reflecting the diversity of actions and how they collectively support 4Seas’ long-term vision.

Translocal Networked Defense: Connecting the Tribes

One approach to building the Zone is through the creation of a network of local actors that are enabling cultural, social, and institutional innovation, that are all components of a wider defensive sanctuary. This local zone may then be linked to 4seas existing global network of collaborators and other local networks in places such as Bangkok, Dali, Shanghai, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Singapore, creating a translocal network of zones across the world.

Translocal is a term used to describe a composite of place-based social movements that facilitates the exchange of knowledge, resources, and practices through linking up localities in a network of networks. Through creating new spaces of agency, solidarity, and reflection, translocalism is recognised as a tool of resistance, emancipation, and transformation of social norms beyond standard community, institutional, and geographical constraints.¹⁸

Inspired by both the **Two Loops model**¹⁹ and **Michel Bauwens’ cosmo-local typology**²⁰, we engage with a wide spectrum of tribes who represent the seeds of this emerging system.

These can be a reference for the types of Thai and global **individuals, businesses, communities** that we will engage with through our programs and activities. This is an initial list of avatars & definitions, that will be actively developed and grown as part of the program.

This includes

- **local initiators** - these are the locally rooted people who take local initiatives in creating economic, geographic, or technological defense. They manage the physical substrate—community-run hardware, food production, health providers, community care providers, that ensure operational independence from centralized providers.
- **digital nomad “everywheres”** - digital nomads willing to be in service of defensive economic alliances and cross-pollinate across local and global networks.

¹⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(23\)00193-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(23)00193-6/fulltext)

¹⁹ https://visiblenetworklabs.com/2024/08/16/what-is-the-two-loops-model/#elementor-toc_heading-anchor-0

²⁰ <https://4thgenerationcivilization.substack.com/p/the-cosmo-local-plan-for-our-next>

- **open-source developers** - people who build and share tools, knowledge, and resources for others to use and remix. Responsible for the protocol substrate, ensuring the community can "exit, fork, and reassemble" its digital identity at any time
- **cosmo-local entrepreneurs** - people who are building business that further economic, technological, and geographic defense. They represent Vitalik's "Third Sector"—businesses that are not seeking to become megacorporations but are focused on **economic defense** and the stewardship of the commons.
- **bridge builder**: Bridge builders serve as the "diplomatic interface" between the new network society and legacy institutions like states or corporate platforms

By identifying and linking the tribes together you are in the first step towards creating a zone. **The tribes help form the answer to the question: who are we building a sanctuary for? Who are the people that 4seas defends and that forms the defense.** Each of these tribes play a role in the community defense, either through local resources and coordination, or cypherpunk tools and technological support, or through translation work across cultural contexts.

On the individual level, participation in this network allows actors to build meaningful connections across communities, strengthening their support systems and resilience. At the level of 4Seas as a community, engaging individuals from diverse backgrounds helps broaden its composition and mitigate the tensions inherent in the Chinese/crypto paradox. At the level of Chiang Mai, this approach contributes to greater diversity and deeper global engagement. Cultivating plurality in this way functions as a form of defense—offering a counterbalance to monolithic cultures and centralized power structures.

Technological defense: From Geographic Escape to Sanctuary Technologies

Historically, regions such as Zomia functioned as spaces of refuge—geographically remote areas where communities could maintain autonomy beyond the reach of centralized power. The idea of 天高皇帝遠 captured this logic: distance created freedom. Mountains, forests, and borderlands were not just landscapes, but defensive infrastructures.

In the contemporary world, however, this condition no longer holds. Advances in surveillance, digital infrastructure, and geopolitical reach have rendered geographic escape increasingly insufficient. Even remote regions are now entangled within global systems of control. As a result, the frontier of autonomy is shifting. If escape was once physical, it is now increasingly technological. Rather than moving away from power, communities must now construct technological environments that enable resilience and relative independence within it.

In this context, Vitalik Buterin introduces the notion of sanctuary technologies: free and open-source tools that allow individuals and communities to communicate, coordinate, manage risk, and collaborate under conditions of external pressure. These systems draw

from a deeper set of guarantees emerging within decentralized infrastructures—most notably the properties of censorship resistance, openness, privacy, and security (CROPS)—which together ensure that such tools remain resistant to capture, extractive control, or unilateral shutdown. As the [Ethereum Foundation mandate](#) emphasizes, these properties “must remain... an indivisible whole,” forming the non-negotiable foundation for self-sovereign systems. Together, they enable what Buterin describes as “digital islands of stability in a chaotic era.” The ambition is not to replace existing systems outright, but to carve out spaces of autonomy within them—to enable communities to remain coherent and self-organizing even as external conditions become unstable.

In this sense, sanctuary technologies can be understood as a kind of digital Zomia. Not a place one escapes to, but a layer of infrastructure that travels with the community, allowing autonomy to be enacted wherever it is situated.

As part of the Ethereum ecosystem, 4Seas operates within one of the most active experimental environments for building such infrastructures. Ethereum provides access to a global network of builders, a strong culture of open experimentation, and a growing body of tools for coordination, governance, and public goods funding. It does not prescribe a single economic or social model, but instead creates a substrate for plural forms of organization to emerge. This openness, combined with its hacker ethos and counter-cultural roots, positions Ethereum as a fertile ground for the development of sanctuary technologies.

Within this landscape, privacy emerges as a particularly critical domain. Increasingly, individuals are not only exposed to external threats, but are also subject to continuous extraction—of attention, data, and behavior. Technology, in this sense, has become both the medium of attack and the potential site of defense. Privacy-preserving systems are therefore not merely technical upgrades; they are mechanisms for protecting agency. They defend attention from manipulation, data from extraction, and the individual from becoming fully legible to systems of control.

At the **level of the self**, it concerns the protection of individual privacy, censorship resistance for individuals, and the preservation of attention as a finite and vulnerable resource. At the **level of the community**, it enables safer communication and information flows, supports collective presence and well-being, and builds community-level immunity against censorship and fragmentation. At the **level of the environment**, these technologies become particularly critical for displaced and vulnerable communities—such as those in Chiang Mai—who require new forms of protection that are not tied to geography alone. In this sense, sanctuary technologies begin to form a true manifestation of a digital Zomia: a distributed, portable infrastructure of refuge that can exist within, yet remain partially autonomous from, dominant systems.

This perspective resonates with [Geordan Shannon](#)’s notion of “technical spaces of care,” where digital infrastructures are designed not to extract, but to support. These are systems that enable collaboration while minimizing exposure, that amplify collective capacity without compromising safety. Technology, in this framing, becomes not an instrument of control, but an infrastructure of care.

For 4Seas, technological defense is not a separate domain, but a core component of its broader vision. If historical Zomia provided refuge through geography, 4Seas can contribute

to building the technological conditions for autonomy in a networked world. This means engaging with sanctuary technologies not only as tools, but as part of an integrated socio-technical system—one that connects infrastructure, community, and place.

In doing so, 4Seas positions itself as more than a physical node in Chiang Mai. It becomes part of a distributed effort to explore how communities might sustain autonomy, cooperation, and resilience in an era where neither geography nor institutions alone can provide protection.

Economical defense: From Dual Institutions to Plural Modes of Exchange

Modern societies have largely been organized around two dominant institutional forms: the state and the market. The state redistributes resources and provides protection, while the market organizes production and exchange through price mechanisms. However, this dual structure has increasingly shown its limitations, particularly in addressing questions of resilience, reciprocity, and long-term collective well-being.

The work of Kojin Karatani offers a useful lens to rethink this condition. Through his theory of modes of exchange, Karatani distinguishes between different ways in which societies organize relationships and resource flows. Beyond the familiar forms of redistribution (Mode B, associated with the state) and market exchange (Mode C), he points toward a fourth mode (Mode D), which emphasizes reciprocity and the commons as a higher-order form of social organization.

From this perspective, economic defense is not simply about securing financial sustainability. It is about designing the relationships through which value flows, and understanding how different modes of exchange can coexist and reinforce one another.

4Seas can be understood as operating within this transition—from a dual-institution model toward a tri-institutional configuration of state, market, and commons.

As an emerging institution, 4Seas may at times take on roles that resemble each of these modes. In certain contexts, it may function similarly to a state—coordinating resources, providing support structures, or stewarding shared infrastructure. In others, it may act within the logic of the market—developing products, offering services, or investing in aligned ventures. At the same time, it plays a critical role in cultivating the commons—supporting shared knowledge, open-source technologies, and collective systems of care.

The core challenge, therefore, is not to choose between these modes, but to understand how to navigate between them intentionally.

At the heart of this approach is a shift in perspective: from focusing on “business models” to focusing on relationships and audiences. Each group that 4Seas engages with—local communities, global builders, institutional partners, or nomadic participants—operates within different expectations of value and exchange. Economic defense lies in understanding:

- who the relevant audiences are

- what they value
- what forms of exchange are appropriate in each relationship

In this context, the commons is not outside of exchange, but represents a form of reciprocal exchange, where value is not immediately quantified, but circulates through trust, contribution, and shared benefit over time.

This allows 4Seas to develop a hybrid economic system, where:

- revenue can be generated through products and services
- investment can support the growth of aligned projects
- commons-based mechanisms can sustain shared infrastructure and long-term ecosystem health

Importantly, investment itself can be understood as part of this broader defensive strategy. Rather than being purely extractive or profit-driven, investments can be aligned with the development of sanctuary systems—for example, supporting technologies that embody calm design principles, or funding communities that serve as testing grounds for privacy and coordination tools.

In this way, economic activity becomes not only a means of sustainability, but a mechanism for reinforcing the broader defensive architecture of the ecosystem.

Ultimately, economic defense for 4Seas is about building a system where value flows reinforce resilience rather than undermine it—where market activity, institutional coordination, and commons-based reciprocity are not in tension, but are deliberately composed to support long-term autonomy and collective flourishing.

Viewed through the lens of exchange, economic defense can be understood as the cultivation of relationships through flows of value. At the **individual level**, it helps participants recognize different forms of relationships and how they intersect with community boundaries and responsibilities. At the **community level**, it provides an alternative framework for understanding “business models” and the commons, supporting stronger local and translocal relationships in alignment with the broader network defense. At the **environmental level (Chiang Mai)**, it helps avoid extractive economic activities by fostering regenerative value flows and more reciprocal relationships. Through this lens, 4Seas gains greater clarity in building genuine, long-term local relationships.

Community Defense: Immunity for Community

Community defense in the context of 4Seas does not simply refer to strengthening an internal community. Rather, it involves **establishing clear governance structures and boundaries** that allow the ecosystem to grow in a healthy and resilient way. Setting boundaries within a community can itself be an act of defense, as it determines who has access to specific resources, spaces, and information. This approach aligns with one of the foundational principles of commons governance identified by Nobel Prize–winning economist Elinor Ostrom in her research on common-pool resources: *clearly defined boundaries*. According to Ostrom, effective commons require both **biophysical boundaries**, which

define the resources being managed, and **social boundaries**, which determine who has the right to access and use those resources.

In the context of 4Seas, establishing such boundaries can help clarify participation levels and responsibilities within the ecosystem. During a discussion with Vitalik Buterin in January 2026, we explored the idea of a **community conversion pathway** that reflects different degrees of engagement within the 4Seas ecosystem. This model describes a progression from **Visitor** → **Community Member** → **Core Contributor**. Visitors may first encounter 4Seas through public-facing activities such as events, workshops, or the restaurant space. Some of these participants may gradually develop a sense of belonging and begin organizing activities within the space, becoming community members. Over time, a smaller number may accumulate deeper experience and cultural familiarity within the ecosystem, eventually taking on greater responsibility as core contributors who help sustain and guide the community. In a time of change and disruption and growing awareness among many people around prioritising health, a sanctuary that prioritises health will keep people nourished and energised.

The cypher punk “revolution”, like revolutions in the past, will need to create “Spaces of Care” that both holds the work and nourishes the individual and collective, and support systemic change over time. 4seas though its social spaces should focus on generating “relational wealth”—collective knowledge repositories, mentorship circles, and networks of mutual support that process trauma and prevent burnout²¹. The French revolution was sustained by physical spaces that provided housing and mutual aid for all organising. Creating more formal structures can allow community members to be more visible within the 4seas systems.

At present, 4Seas largely embraces the **organic and open-ended nature of emerging communities**, allowing experimentation and spontaneous participation. This openness can be valuable for fostering creativity and attracting diverse participants. However, complex systems theory suggests that **healthy systems require a balance between openness and structure**. Too much chaos can lead to fragmentation, while too much rigidity can stifle experimentation.

Introducing clearer community structures and participation pathways can therefore strengthen the long-term resilience of the 4Seas ecosystem. It also allows 4seas to more intentionally engage with local Thai people and others, as identified in the translocal network defense. Through intentionally finding local initiators and giving them clarity around their role and positioning in relation to others within the 4seas community creates trust and clarity.

Such structures not only support the development of shared commons and collective governance but also function as a form of defense. By clarifying roles, responsibilities, and levels of access, the community can cultivate trust, maintain coherence, and protect its resources while continuing to welcome new participants. In this sense, community governance becomes a form of **social immunity**, allowing the ecosystem to remain open yet resilient as it grows.

²¹ Spaces of Care, Geordan

Community defense also provides a clear pathway across multiple levels of engagement. At **the individual level**, it helps participants understand how to navigate relationships, roles, and expectations within the ecosystem. At the **community level**, it enables 4Seas to maintain integrity by distinguishing aligned contributors from misaligned or extractive actors, both internally and externally—effectively creating a protective “moat” around the community. At the **level of the broader environment (Chiang Mai)**, clearer structures and boundaries make 4Seas more legible to local communities and institutions, allowing for more intentional and trusted forms of engagement. In this way, community defense operates not only as internal governance, but as a multi-layered form of social coordination and protection.

Section D — 4Seas’ Theory of Change

Building on the preceding analysis and strategic framing, this section outlines a **theory of change** for 4Seas. Rather than prescribing a linear roadmap, this framework articulates the underlying logic through which 4Seas’ activities may contribute to its long-term vision.

Given the complexity of the challenges addressed—ranging from technological centralization to social disconnection and displacement—this theory of change does not assume a simple cause-and-effect pathway. Instead, it recognizes that multiple interventions will interact, overlap, and evolve over time. The activities outlined below should therefore be understood as **interdependent components of a broader system**, rather than discrete or sequential steps.

The Vision

[Need further discussion with 4Seas core team to define]

The long-term vision of 4Seas is to contribute to the emergence of a **defensive networked society**—a form of social organization that embodies cypherpunk values while remaining grounded in real-world communities.

Such a society would function as an alternative to the dominant state–market system by:

- distributing power rather than concentrating it
- enabling communities to coordinate, govern, and sustain themselves
- providing social, technological, and economic resilience under conditions of uncertainty

In this sense, 4Seas is not only an experimental space, but a **practical response to contemporary “wicked problems.”** It operates at the intersection of questions around belonging, mobility, and sovereignty—exploring what “home” and “community” can mean in an age of global movement and digital networks.

Core Assumptions

This theory of change is grounded in several key assumptions that inform the design of 4Seas’ activities:

- **Localization enables long-term grounding**
Deep engagement with local contexts is necessary for sustainability, legitimacy, and meaningful impact.
- **Reciprocal resource exchange strengthens networks**
Genuine, non-extractive exchange—across both local and translocal networks—creates the conditions for durable relationships and shared resilience.
- **Clear community boundaries support coherence and trust**
Defining participation, roles, and access helps maintain the integrity of the community while enabling growth.
- **Translocal connectivity provides resilience and optionality**
Being embedded in global networks allows communities to adapt, relocate, or reconfigure under changing conditions.
- **Technology alone is insufficient without social grounding**
Technological infrastructure must be embedded within social, cultural, and ecological systems to remain meaningful and effective.

Key Activities and Intended Effects

The following activities represent key areas of intervention through which 4Seas seeks to operationalize its vision. These activities are deeply interconnected, and their effects are mutually reinforcing.

Activity 0: Foundational Housekeeping (Before Public Engagement)

4Seas must address internal tensions and clarify identity BEFORE launching community activities.

Timeline: 1-2 months, led by Nicolas + core team

Deliverable: Public-facing statement (Thai + English) addressing:

1. **Who we are**
 - "4Seas is a Chinese-founded, Ethereum-supported community space in Chiang Mai"
 - Explicit about diaspora composition and local commitment
2. **What we are building toward**
 - 4seas vision
 - coworking and co-living, zuzalu library longevity space, etc. Using language that is relatable locally.
3. **How we relate to Thai context**
 - commitment to Chiang Mai highlighting past engagement
 - Intention for collaboration and learning
4. **Source of Funding**
 - Acknowledge dual suspicion (Chinese + crypto) directly

Format:

- 2-page document (max)

- Thai-led translation review
- Tested with Thai Bridge Builders (Yucca, Napon, Thai civil society contacts)
- Published on 4seas.xyx and used as introduction in all partnership conversations

Success metric: Thai partners can explain 4Seas' purpose to their networks without confusion or suspicion.

Activity 1: Establish Local Identity and Reputation

Intended effect: Build trust and legitimacy within local communities

#1 Identify Champion Partners

Timeline: 2-3 months, parallel to Prerequisite 1

Objective: Identify local initiators and cosmo-local entrepreneurs to serve as **Local Stewards** who may lead to becoming trusted local champions for 4seas Foundation and part of the translocal network defense.

Criteria for Champions:

- Thai local & Chiang Mai embedded
- Trusted in at least one local network (academic, civil society, business, creative)
- Can translate between crypto/non-crypto worlds

Candidate Pool:

- **Napon** (CMU Economics) — academic legitimacy + economic research grounding.
 - Napon's existing project on local business rating
 - CMU public service partnership
- **Yucca Wai** (Myanmar Civic Tech) — civil society + trust across diaspora communities.
 - Myanmar related experiments and support
- **Aunya** (4Seas internal Champion) – Thai local network, internal communication.

Process:

1. Individual conversations towards supporting existing initiatives.
2. Frame as **stewardship invitation**
3. Offer: "We want YOU to shape what this becomes, not execute our predetermined plan"
4. Test through small collaborations before formal governance role

Success metric: 1-2 champions verbally commit to 12-18 month pilot stewardship role

#2 Gradual CMU collaboration

Timeline: 18 months, parallel to Prerequisite 1 and Activity 4

Objective: Establish official collaboration with CMU across different departments. Utilize the CMU public service network to further identify potential collaborators.

Process:

1. Overall research mapping out CMU public service projects
2. Support individual projects in the first 6 months to build up reputation
3. Start an official CMU public service project round around 6-12 months

Success metric: 2-3 projects CMU projects funded through 4Seas in the first 6 months, first round establish around 6-12 month.

Activity 2: Establish Clear Community Boundaries and Guidelines

Intended effect: Strengthen internal coherence and community “immunity”

#1 Community Townhall Series

Launch: Month 2, then quarterly

What: Regular dialogues with all stakeholder groups using 4Seas spaces

Objectives:

- Creates voice + accountability mechanisms
- Surfaces tensions before they become crises
- Builds collective stewardship
- Tests governance capacity before fund launch

Structure:

First Townhall (Month 2): "What is 4Seas?" Listening Session

Format:

- Led by Aunya (Thai facilitator) + Thai-speaking team member
- 2 hours: 30 min presentation, 90 min structured dialogue

#2 Develop 4Seas community guideline

Launch: 1-2 month

What: Develop the visitor - community member - core contributor pathway

Objectives:

- Clarify 4Seas' community engagement pathway
- Build internal immunity

- Establish clear information flow and boundaries for each layer
- Create clear structure to build commons

Process:

- Several 4Seas internal conversation to define roles
- Cross reference with the translocal network defense strategy

Format:

- A implementable 4Seas community guideline
-

Activity 3: Establish Participation Pathways with Translocal Network

Intended effect: Create translocal continuity and “exit” pathways

#1 Identify Translocal Network Champion

Timeline: 2-3 months, parallel to Prerequisite 1

Objective: Identify digital nomad “everywheres”, open-source developers, bridge builders and cosmo-local entrepreneurs to serve as **Translocal Stewards** who may lead to becoming trusted translocal network champions for 4seas Foundation and part of the translocal network defense.

Criteria for Champions:

- Persons who embodies Etheruem, Cypherpunk, d/acc value systems
- Trusted in at least one translocal network (Zuzalu, Ethereum, Network States etc.)
- Understands and values localization

Candidate Pool:

- **Songyi Lee** – Deeply connected in Etheruem ecosystem with deep understanding on Asian philosophies, experience design and cultural engagement.
- **Andrej Berlin** – Engaged with multiple translocal network, understand localization and can bring strategic values to conversations.
- **Michel Bauwens** – Wellknown in cosmological and ethereum movements, deep understanding on commons.
- **Vitalik Buterin**

Process:

1. Individual conversations towards supporting existing initiatives.
2. Frame as **stewardship invitation**
3. Offer: "We want YOU to shape what this becomes, not execute our predetermined plan"
4. Test through small collaborations before formal governance role

Success metric: 1-2 champions verbally commit to 12-18 month pilot stewardship role

Underlying effects: The translocal champions will engage and share deeply about 4Seas in the translocal network. Potentially leading more diverse community members to 4Seas that will eventually convert to core contributors.

#2 Launch 4Seas White Paper

Timeline: 3-4 months

Objectives:

- Officially introduce 4Seas to the translocal community
- Present 4Seas with academic and strategic depth (speak their language)

Process:

- Go through the following activities to build up the rest of the structure:
 - Activity 0: Foundational Housekeeping
 - Activity 1-1: Identify Champion Partners
 - Activity 2-2: Develop 4Seas community guideline
 - Activity 3-1: Identify Translocal Network Champion
 - Activity 4-1: Mode of Exchange Clarification Exercise
 - Activity 4-3: Tokenomics design

Format:

- A multi-lingual (English, Chinese, Thai) 4Seas Whitepaper
-

Activity 4: Develop Modes of Exchange (Commons and Market Interface)

Intended effect: Clarify economic sustainability and the relationship between capital and commons

#1 Mode of Exchange Clarification Exercise

Timeline: 1-2 months

What: Clarify all value exchange activities within 4Seas

Objectives:

- Know when to engage in what kind of exchange with whom
- Further inform the commons fund

Process: to be designed

#2 Pilot Fund Launch

Months 6 months from now : Design | : Operation

What: Small-scale experimental fund (\$25k-\$50k USD equivalent) for testing governance and grant-making

Objectives:

- Learning vehicle (not THE fund yet)
- Attractor for partnership conversations ("we have resources to offer")
- Test bed for governance mechanisms before scaling

Design Principles:

1. **Size matters:** Small enough to be forgiving of mistakes, large enough to be meaningful
2. **Thai-global:** Selection committee must include mix of local initiators, cosmo-local entrepreneurs, open-source developers, and digital nomads, with a 50% Thai representation.
3. **tracks:** financial literacy and education, Thai event grant
4. **Transparent:** All applications, decisions, outcomes public
5. **Accountable:** Report back to Community Townhalls

#3 Tokenomics design

What: Design 4Seas' community currency

[To be defined after discussions with 4Seas]

Activity 5: Develop and Deploy Sanctuary Technologies

Intended effect: Enable a form of "digitally embedded Zomia" that supports communication, coordination, and resilience

#1 Identify Sanctuary Technologies at all levels

What: To know what Sanctuary Technologies means to 4Seas

[To be defined after discussions with 4Seas]

It is important to note that these activities are not isolated. Actions taken in one area—such as building local reputation—will influence outcomes in others, including community governance, economic models, and technological development.

As such, the theory of change should be understood as a **dynamic system of feedback loops**, rather than a linear progression. The effectiveness of 4Seas' approach will depend on its ability to continuously adapt, learn, and rebalance across these interconnected domains.

Building towards 4Seas Foundation

This project started as an exploration towards setting up 4Seas Foundation, however, we realized in the process that there are still lots of foundational work that needs to be done before registration or establishing anything big. With the identified strategies, we see one year as a milestone towards formalizing the foundation. Following are the activities we identified as checkpoint by a year:

- Activity 0: Foundational Housekeeping
- Activity 1-1: Identify Champion Partners
- Activity 2-1: Community Townhall Series
- Activity 2-2: Develop 4Seas community guideline
- Activity 4-1: Mode of Exchange Clarification Exercise
- Activity 4-2: Pilot Fund Launch
- Activity 5-1: Identify Sanctuary Technologies at all levels

The rest will be nice to have but good add-ons that can further the progress. Please note that trust can not be built overnight, but if we are willing to move at the speed of trust, the network will reward you with unimaginable gifts.

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