

Title: Labour migration: diversity and inequality, and imaginaries of the future in Southeast Asia.

Conveners: Lennie Geerlings, Henk Schulte Nordholt (KITLV-University Leiden); Prasert Rangkla, Soimart Rungmanee (Thammasat University)

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This panel has two interconnected sessions. The first is concerned with diversity and inequality, and the second focuses on imaginaries of the future.

The first session invites 3 young scholars to join.

The first session explores issues of labour migration and diversity in Southeast Asian cities and beyond. This session aims to disrupt the framing of migration in terms of flows and laws, globalisation and development, or 'push' and 'pull' factors. Instead it seeks to explore the on-the-ground, day-to-day experience of migrants in Southeast Asian cities and beyond. Ethnographic analysis of the everyday, fleshy experiences of people defined as migrants help understand the production of difference and inequity in culturally diverse 'host' cities and states.

Ethnographic analyses underline the multiple and simultaneous subjectivities of migrants – for example, as workers who are also family members of students, or as foreigners who are also lovers – and their different locations on intersecting axes of power including ethnicity, gender and social class. What can we learn from analysing the experiences of migrants through a lens of positionality and intersectionality? What can we learn from migrants' experiences about bordering practices, the production of Others, and the production and maintenance of inequity in contemporary Southeast Asian cities and elsewhere? How do processes of belonging and solidarity intervene in practices of difference and inequality?

We invite in particular young scholars who have started to explore this field of ethnographic research to share their fieldwork experiences and to raise and discuss questions in this panel.

Presentations by:

Lennie Geerlings (KITLV-Leiden University)

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The second session focuses on imaginaries of the future. Migration studies see the concept of wellbeing confined to purely material wealth, while the notion of future is usually taken-for-granted. Both terms tend to be abstract and indifferent to cultural frameworks, and engage insufficiently with the rapidly changing social environments in which migration is situated. Scholars have however increasingly emphasized the importance of widening the attention to how different human individuals and societies organize and engage their own future (Appadurai 2013; Robbins 2013). In refiguring the future within specific cultural systems, we will be better able to place more particular ideas about well-being. The panel suggests to explore how ideas of well-being and future shape particular forms and experiences of migration in Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. It will do so by teasing out how these ideas play out at different moments in migration: pre-migration, in migration, and through return migration. We seek answers to the following questions: How do people understand

their wellbeing and future? How do such imaginaries shift over the migration life course and inform migration practices? How do people living in different societies strive to create the good in their migratory projects? How do understandings of “well-being” change overtime and across contexts? What are the implications of migration on well-being of families and communities?

Presentations by:

Patcharin Lapanan (Khon Kaen University)

Prasert Rangkla (Thammasat University)

Roy Huijsmans (International Institute of Social Studies)

Soimart Rungmanee (Thammasat University)