**Current Strands and Trends of Forced Migration Studies in Southeast Asia**

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Recently, movements of forced mass migration are mainly associated with war-torn countries such as Syria and Iraq. However, Southeast-Asian (SEA) countries not only host a significant number of international refugees and asylum seekers but have also been witnessing regional crises of transnational and domestic mass displacement due to armed conflicts, cultural, ethnic, and religious prosecution or environmental degradation and natural disasters. Two most recent cases include the so-called Rohingya crisis and the conflict in Marawi, Philippines, where most of its 200,000 inhabitants fled the city after it had been overrun by a local offshoot of the Islamic State. From an area studies perspective, these and many more examples raise the question of how the issue of domestic and transnational forced migration is being addressed at domestic as well as bi- and multilateral levels within the region and how this is reflected in current trends and strands of research on the region.

Thus far, we know little about the current state of refugees and internally displaced persons in Southeast Asia. There are only rough estimates available on the actual number of people that migrate involuntarily to or within Southeast Asia. However, according to UNHCR, 14% of the 65.3 million forced migrants worldwide are currently being hosted by countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Regarding refugees and asylum seekers in SEA countries, official numbers only exist for Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, which, according to UNHCR, hosted close to 285,000 in 2015. In Southeast Asia, only Cambodia, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol. Although the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration mentions ASEAN’s and its member states’ commitment to guarantee the right to seek asylum, thus far, the member state’s way to address the issue of forced migration has been rather individualistic.

Moreover, Southeast Asian countries have become important transit countries for asylum seekers and refugees looking for permanent protection outside of the region. Lacking coherent regional political frameworks for the handling of asylum seekers and refugees leaves many displaced people in highly vulnerable situations. This panel seeks to address their individual and collective experiences as well as the political, spatial, socio-economic and humanitarian conditions that determine them. It will bring together ethnographic, sociological and geographical contributions that document and analyze everyday lives of migrant and asylum seeker populations in Southeast Asia. This panel presents parts of the results of an international collaboration on forced migration studies in Southeast Asia that started with a workshop convened at the EUROSEAS Conference 2017 in Oxford, UK. The results will be published in December 2018 in a focus issue of the Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies (ASEAS) entitled “Forced Migration in Southeast Asia”.