Building Resilience Through Translocality

*Climate Change, Migration & Social Resilience in Rural Thailand*

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Building resilience through translocality
Climate Change, Migration & Social Resilience in Rural Thailand

Project setting

- Funded by BMBF (Nachwuchsgruppen Globaler Wandel, „Forschung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung“)
- 4 + 1 years (start 10/2013)
- Hosted by the Department of Geography, Bonn
- TransRe Research Group
  - 1 Group Leader & 5 PhDs
With whom do we work?

- **Practice partners:**
  1. Raks Thai Foundation
  2. IOM Thailand

- **Academic partners:**
  1. In Thailand: Chiangmai University, Khon Kean University, Mahidol University, START-SEA
  2. In Germany: UNU-EHS, DIE
  3. RMIT, Australia, NUS Singapore
Structure

1. Environment & Migration: Where is the debate?
2. What is our position & objective?
3. Where do we do research?
4. What is our approach?
5. How is the project structured?
6. All „only“ for the shelf?
1. Where is the debate?

Migration-environment nexus I

- “climate & environmental refugees”
- Focus on environmental impact on migration decision
- Minimalists Vs maximalists

1. Where is the debate?

Migration-environment nexus II

- highly politicized debate
- driven by environmental and security discourses
2. What is our position?

- Migration as key driver of global change
  1. 740 Mio. internal migrants*
  2. 214 Mio. international migrants*

- Feedback effects of migration on
  1. coping/adaptation to environment risks
  2. environment change

- Feedback effects neglected in research

*Source: UNDP 2009
2. What is our objective?

(1) Understand social and ecological changes induced by feedback processes of migration

(2) Focus on the effects on social resilience to environmental risks in the place of origin of migrants
2. What is our objective?

(1) Understand social and ecological changes induced by feedback processes of migration.

(2) Focus on the effects on social resilience to environmental risks in the place of origin of migrants.
3. Where do we carry out research?

Areas of origin of migrants:

- Rural areas in Thailand
  - 4 sub-districts

- Selection criteria:
  - Risk exposure
  - Rural Livelihoods system
  - Embeddedness in migration network
3. Where do we carry out research?

Site selection:
- Northern & Northeastern Region
- 51 villages in 8 provinces
- Semi-structured interviews with villages heads
3. Where do we carry out research?

Areas of destination of migrants:

- **Internal migration:** Urban & industrial centers in Thailand
- **International migration:** Singapore & Germany
4. What is our approach?

- Translocality

Economic, political, social and cultural dynamics outside the place

Source: Greiner & Sakdapolrak 2013
4. What is our approach?

- Translocality

Source: Greiner & Sakdapolrak 2013
5. How is the project structured?

- 5 PhDs in 4 Subprojects
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks
Livelihoods vulnerability

Focus

- Rural livelihoods
- Places of origin of migrants
- Vulnerability to multiple stressors

Objective

- Identify factors contributing to vulnerability
- Understand the role of migration in rural livelihoods systems
- Explore mechanisms of resilient transformation through translocality

Agriculture play an important role as fall back sector for migrant workers.

Pick-up truck carried agriculture products to outside communities.
Livelihoods vulnerability

Method

- Mixed-methods approach
- Participatory vulnerability assessment & scenario-based planning

Contribution

- Understanding of vulnerability in the places of origin of migrants (Who? Why? What consequences?)
- Understanding of the role of environmental risks and migration in rural livelihoods system
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks

Social practices of translocality
Internal migration

Focus

- Internal migration in Thailand
- Actor based process of linking destination and home area

Objective

- Understand the production and perpetuation of translocal linkages
- Analyze migrants’ everyday practices inducing their multi-sited anchoring
Internal migration

Method

- Multi-sited ethnography
- Qualitative social research: in-depth interviews, participant observation

Contribution

- Connectedness of internal migrants to places of origin (Why? How?)
- Understanding of internal migrants’ multiple embeddedness and their influence on the way of dealing with environmental risk

The transport system is an essential factor for translocal linkages

Environmental stress requires response strategies (source: Sopon Naruchaikusol)
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks

Social practices of translocality
International migration

Focus

- International migration
- Feed-back processes; (social) remittances
- Impacts of different migration regimes: (1) labor migration to Singapore and (2) marriage migration to Germany

Objective

- to understand translocal social practices of migrants rooted in multiple localities and their effects on social resilience
International migration

Method

- Multi-sited Ethnography
  1. Qualitative research
  2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
  3. Visual methods (participatory filming)

Contribution

- Comparative view on different transnational migration systems
- Actor-oriented view
- Better understanding of translocal practices and connectedness

Research process: Multi-sited Ethnography (Marcus 1995)
Sopon Naruchaikusol
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks

Till Rockenbauch
Migration networks & social resilience

Luise Porst
Social practices of translocality

Simon Peth

Diagram: Economic, political, social and cultural dynamics outside the place.
Migration induced by place.
Place
Origin
Destination
People
Identities
Resources
Information
Translocale
Network & Flows
Place
Dynamics outside place
Locale / Translocale

Time point 2
Social networks

Focus

- Role of social networks
- Resilience to environmental risks in rural areas

Objective

- Study the flows, structure and dynamics in translocal social networks
- Understand how embeddedness in social networks impacts social resilience
- Understand relationship between household and community resilience
Social networks

Network typologies (Source: Bodin&Crona 2009)

Methods

- Social Network Analysis (SNA), quantitative and qualitative
- Data exploration, (semi-)standardized questionnaires, network mapping
- Case study on resource use management

Contribution

- Meta-level analysis
- Integrating system and actor based approaches
- Identification of applicable methods and procedures for practitioners and policy makers

Channing agricultural practices (Source: Alexander Reif)
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks

Migration networks & social resilience

Social practices of translocality

Governing translocal social resilience
Governance & policies

Focus

- Governance processes at the interface between climate change adaptation and migration
- Policy, policy makers & stakeholders on multiple levels

Objective

- Understand the climate-migration policy environment and its influence on social resilience
- Guide policy dialogue and suggest how migration and translocality can be mainstreamed into policies relevant for climate change adaptation
Governance & policies

Method

- Multi-level policy and stakeholder analysis
  1. With a focus on climate change adaptation policies (e.g. community-based adaptation)
  2. Translocality allows the re-framing of policy analysis beyond borders (e.g. migration policies)

Contribution

- Understanding the impact of higher-level processes on the local level and translocal resilience

Local residents meet to discuss environmental priorities (Source: Naruchaikusol)

Water storage systems can help reduce the impact of drought (Source: Oxfam Thailand)
Vulnerability & resilience to climatic risks

Migration networks & social resilience

Social practices of translocality

Governing translocal social resilience
6. All only for the shelf?

From knowledge to action I

(1) Pilot project –
Support resilience through translocality (RaksThai)

→ Implementation of pilot projects which aim to identify and initiate pathways of translocal resilience-building on the community level.

Community meeting with CARE workers (Source: Paumai)
6. All only for the shelf?

From knowledge to action II

(2) Toolkit –
Resilience building toolkit for adaptation policy-makers and practitioners (RMIT)

→ Develop a toolkit for supporting translocal social resilience-building for the local governments and NGOs working on community-based adaptation.
6. All only for the shelf?

Reach out ...

- Publication (scientific paper & working paper, fact sheets)
- Social Media (facebook, twitter, blog)
- Events (scientific & policy events)
- Capacity building (short courses in Thailand)
Time frame ...

- 2015: Empirical field research
- 2016: Pilots projects & toolkit development
- 2017: Completion of 5 PhD Thesis
Key messages

- Reframe migration-environment nexus
- Potential of migration for climate change adaptation
- Bridge science-practice gap
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