Living between the village and the global city

Translocal connections & social resilience of Thai migrant workers in Singapore

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Labour Migration

Young farmer in Nangrong, Thailand in 2015

Thai migrant workers, Singapore in 1994

(Photo : Simon A. Peth)

(Photo : Srikhoon Jiangkratok)
Research Area

Conference: Connecting the Dots

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(MAP: L. Porst & S. Peth / TransRe Project)
Multi-sited Method

2015

Udon
Buriram
BKK

PLACES OF ORIGIN

2016

Udon
Buriram
SG

PLACES OF MIGRATION

Analysis Phase

Explanation:
- Places of origin in rural Thailand
- Translocal interrelations
- Migrants/migration networks
- Follow the trajectories; research process
- Places of migration and destinations (e.g. rural and urban Thailand, Singapore, Germany)

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Multi-sited Method

» Semi-structured interviews

» PRA & group discussions

» Photo interviews

» Observations
History of Thai Labour Migration

- Peasant revolts in 1973
- Increasing international migration
- Opening of the labour market in Singapore in 1968
- First reported Thai workers 1978 in Singapore

(Source: National Archive of Singapore)
Fast Development of Singapore

(Photos: S. Jiangkratok 1994; W. Zhang 2011 under CC BY 2.0)
Fast Development of Singapore

(Photos: S. Jiangkratok 1994; W. Zhang 2011 under CC BY 2.0)
Labour Migration to SG

- High level of organization:
  Training centers in Thailand; agents; social networks
  strict controle through MoM in Singapore; quota of foreign workers; Levy Rate

» Singapore can steer the proportion, nationality and sectoral distribution of foreign workers within months.
Labour Migration to SG

- **Migration (infra)structures**
  
  Hightech dormitories with up to 16,000 inmates
  Meeting places of migrants

- **Translocal structures**

  Tuas View Dormitory, Singapur (Photo: S. Peth)

  Bangla Square in Little India, Singapur (Photo: S. Peth)
Hot spot of Translocality

- Hairdresser
- Apparel store (cloths)
- Betting office
- Tour operator
- Phone shop
- Thai supermarket
- Grocery shops
- Beauty salon
- Eateries & restaurants
- Remittance services
- Money exchanger
- Luck

Amulet shops
Thai Disco
Law office
Thai speaking doctor/clinic
Tattoo studio
Bars & Karaoke
Liquor stores
Newspaper shop
Apparel store (cloths)
Money exchanger
Remittance services
Tour operator
Phone shop
Thai supermarket
Grocery shops
Beauty salon
Eateries & restaurants
Amulet shops
Thai Disco
Law office
Thai speaking doctor/clinic
Tattoo studio
Bars & Karaoke
Liquor stores
Newspaper shop
State Controle & Social Exclusion
Focus Point Home

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(Photo: Srikhoon Jiangkratok)
What does this mean for resilience?

- Resilience of whom?
- Resilient to what?
- Temporality of resilience?
Origin of Thai Workers in SG

- Who are the people migrating?
  
  » Rural men / farmers moving into a neo-fordistic system

The provinces of origin of Thai migrant workers registered in Singapore in 2015

(Source: Office of Labour Affairs, Royal Thai Embassy Singapore; Cartography: Simon A. Peth; n= 1214)
The Role of Remittances

Importance of international remittances for HH income

Use of local income:
- Daily expenses
- Agricultural input
- Insurance
- Education
- Local laborer
- Saving

Use of remittances:
- Car & Motorbikes
- Education
- Daily expenses
- New house
- Purchase of land
- Insurances
- Agricultural input
- Agricultural machines
- Local laborer
- Saving

(Source of data: TransRe Project / University of Bonn, S. A. Peth)

Comment: this figure is an aggregated depiction based on a self-assessment of HHs with international migrants. It only represents the perceived proportions of the different sources of income.
Social Remittances

Israel

(Signapore

(PHOTO: Therdtoon Thanomsang)

(PHOTO: Srihkoon Jiangkratok)
Conclusion

Resilience:

**coping**
Capacity improves during migration

**adaptation**
Improves depending on how remittances are used

**transformation**
Higher non-farm income with the next and better educated generation

Migration risks

Migration phase
Pay back debts
Full remittances
Social remittances
Future plans & investments

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Thank you