Migration, agrarian transition, and rural change in Southeast Asia: Introduction

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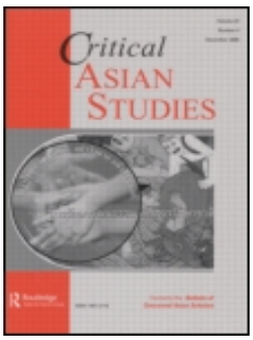

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MIGRATION, AGRARIAN TRANSITION, AND RURAL CHANGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Introduction

Philip F. Kelly, guest editor

ABSTRACT: Intensifying migration flows add new material dimensions to agrarian change in Southeast Asia, with novel forms of livelihood for out-migrants from rural areas, remittance flows for those left behind, and new sources of agricultural labor in places of in-migration. But migration also brings other processes of change that push the analytical boundaries of traditional agrarian political economy. Gender identities are brought into question as men and women move and the masculinities and femininities of migrants and those left behind are reworked. The household is stretched across space and seen more clearly as a contested domain. The spatiality of the village is reworked through long-distance linkages, so that scales of analysis are not quite what they used to be. Issues of ethnic identity are foregrounded as different groups come into contact in the same place. The role of the state (and private recruiters) in regulating migration and in defining and controlling access to citizenship rights requires that new forms of regulation and institutionalism be addressed. In each of these ways, migration provides challenges to understanding rural change. In contextualizing the articles that appear in these two issues of *Critical Asian Studies* (December 2011 and March 2012), this introduction spells out both the empirical processes of migration and rural change in Southeast Asia and the analytical approaches that are relevant to studying them.

The dynamics of change in rural Southeast Asia have been classically read through the lens of peasant studies, with the fundamental process of social change being understood as one in which capitalist commodification is inserted

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into a mode of agricultural production and labor—the agrarian transition. In the process, a peasant mode of production is undermined, supplanted, or co-opted. The foundational studies in the literature, many based on European contexts, were concerned with the ways in which changing relations of production and the resulting processes of class differentiation and inequality might (or might not) lead to political dissent.[1] Since the 1960s, other treatments of the agrarian transition have been similarly concerned with class differentiation, but have also sought to place the process in the context of the changing roles of the state at multiple scales, the complexity and specificity of local situations, various forms of livelihood diversification away from agriculture, and the growing influence of a globalizing resource economy.[2]

Neither the world we study nor the intellectual frameworks we apply, however, have stood still. Changing empirical circumstances mean that the agrarian transition is manifested in a range of ways.[3] Indeed, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of agrarian transitions, as the process of capitalist commodification in agriculture is by no means the only way in which rural areas and agrarian producers are experiencing social and economic change. A wider set of processes shaping rural production would include: agricultural expansion into new zones of production; intensification of production techniques, including mechanization and genetic modification; changing regulatory frameworks, both state-led and privatized; urbanization and industrialization of land uses and livelihoods (such that the agrarian transition may be away from agriculture entirely); environmental change and environmentalist politics; and, the effect of migration on agrarian production and the social and cultural processes in which it is embedded.

Approaching these processes in the twenty-first century also means asking questions that derive from a diverse set of conceptual concerns.[4] Rather than bringing one over-arching theoretical framework to the question of agrarian transitions, a range of approaches are evident: feminist concerns with gendered identities and power relations; geographical literature on the production of space and scale; questions around how cultural meanings and subjectivities intersect with economic processes; political ecologies that ask how nature is constructed, politicized, accessed, and transformed; refined understandings of how the global economy is integrating and operating and affecting livelihoods; and new approaches to the public and private regulation of economic activity that go far beyond understandings of a monolithic capitalist state. Furthermore, as theoretical ideas have proliferated, the impulse to seek grand narratives of historical change has declined—a post-structural sensibility that is skeptical toward grand narratives that universalize and essentialize suffuses much of contemporary social science.

In this context of changing empirical processes and changing conceptual

1. For reviews, see Bernstein 2009; Byres 2009.
2. Hart et al. 1989; Bernstein and Byres, 2001.
3. Borras 2009.
4. Ibid.

Migration, Agrarian Transition, and Rural Change in Southeast Asia

***CAS* 43 (4), DECEMBER 2011**

Introduction, *Philip F. Kelly, guest editor*
Where the Streets Are Paved with Prawns: Crop Booms and Migration in Southeast Asia, *Derek Hall*
More than Culture, Gender, and Class: Erasing Shan Labor in the "Success" of Thailand's Royal Development Project, *Sai S.W. Latt*
Connecting Lives, Living, and Location: Mobility and Spatial Signatures in Northeast Thailand, 1982–2009, *Jonathan Rigg and Albert Salamanca*
Migration and Gender Identity in the Rural Philippines: Households with Farming Wives and Migrant Husbands, *Adam Lukasiewicz*
Coping with Change: Rural Transformation and Women in Contemporary Sarawak, Malaysia, *Hew Cheng Sim*

***CAS* 44 (1), MARCH 2012**

Land, Livelihoods and Remittances: A Political Ecology of Youth Outmigration across the Lao–Thai Mekong Border, *Keith Barney*
Questioning the Rural–Urban Divide: Thai Mobilities and Cultural Citizenship, *Mary Beth Mills*
Migration to the Countryside: Class encounters in peri-urban Chiang Mai, Thailand, *Tubtim Tubtim*
Displacement and Multi-Local Livelihoods in Indonesia: Power and the Migrant Subject, *Rebecca Elmhirst*

lenses, the question of migration is an intriguing one.[5] It adds a new empirical dimension to considerations of agrarian transition, with new forms of livelihood for out-migrants from rural areas, remittance flows for those left behind, and new sources of agricultural labor in places of in-migration. But migration also forces us to contemplate many of the conceptual issues noted above. Gender identities are brought into question as men and women move and the masculinities and femininities of migrants and those left behind are reworked. The household is also stretched across space and seen more clearly as a contested domain. The spatiality of the village is reworked through long-distance linkages, so that scales of analysis are not quite what they used to be. Issues of ethnic identity are foregrounded as different groups come into contact in the same place. The role of the state in regulating migration and in defining and controlling access to citizenship rights, along with the role of recruiters, agencies, and networks, all require that new forms of regulation and institutionalism be addressed. The fact that migration can bring individuals into diverse class positions in different spaces (a woman might be a domestic maid in one context but a land-owner in another), and can lead to class mobility over time, means that fixed categories (peasant, waged worker, landlord, etc.) need to be reconsidered. In each of these ways, migration provides challenges to understanding rural change.

The articles in this *Critical Asian Studies* collection[6] address these questions in Southeast Asia, including case studies that encompass migrants in, or from, Laos, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This introduction will place the articles in a theoretical and empirical context. The first part

5. See, for example, De Haan and Rogaly 2002.
6. This collection of articles is divided into two installments: December 2011 (43:4) and March 2012 (44:1). Articles that will appear in March 2012 are cited as forthcoming in the footnotes and references in this issue. See box above.

elaborates on the nature of agrarian change, the processes that constitute contemporary forms of transition in rural Southeast Asia and on recent theoretical approaches that are relevant to studying them. The second section provides a brief overview of the main migratory movements in contemporary Southeast Asia. The third part then examines the ways in which migration precipitates a new set of questions in studying agrarian change.

Agrarian Transitions and How We Should Know Them

> "One of the most fascinating problems in the field of social and economic history is the delineation of the complex and varied means whereby capitalism became the dominant mode of production in agriculture: growing out of simple commodity production, here via a landlord class and there via a peasantry which gradually became differentiated (so providing, at the extremes, a stratum of rich peasants who ultimately became capitalist farmers and a stratum of poor peasants who were transformed into agricultural laborers or who joined the urban proletariat); slowly penetrating the countryside; developing the forces of production in manifold ways and raising agriculture's productiveness; eroding feudal and semi-feudal relations of production and replacing them with the stark opposition of class of capitalist farmers and one of wage laborers." — Terry Byres[7]

The classic understanding of the agrarian transition, articulated here by Terry Byres, concerns the penetration of capitalist relations of production into agriculture, the rise of an attendant class structure, the development of new production techniques, and the emergence of urban-industrial societies. In the canonical writings of Lenin, Kautsky, and Chayanov, who were analyzing this transition in Europe, the process had immediate salience in terms of the political potential of a rural peasantry and an urban or rural proletariat. While some later treated their work as universal statements on the questions they address, their scholarship was in fact deeply engaged with the specific time and place of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe.[8]

Subsequent writing in this tradition of peasant and agrarian studies has continued to concern itself with issues of livelihood, the organization and technologies of production, land use, tenure, class relations and differentiation, and the role of the state.[9] In other words, material relations of production, and the power relations inherent in them, have formed the core of the agrarian literature. To some extent it has also held on to the grand narrative of sweeping historical change and the "big" categories needed to populate such a narrative: peasants, proletarians, capitalism, technology, the state. In this view, the main drivers of change come in the form of increasing commodification (i.e., capitalist penetration) and changing technologies (most notably, the Green Revolution).

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7. Byres 1982, 82.
8. White 1989.
9. Scott 1976, 1985; Kerkvliet 1990; De Koninck 1992; Pincus 1996; Rigg 2001.

The publication of Gillian Hart, Andrew Turton, and Ben White's *Agrarian Transformations* in 1989 marked a shift in thinking about agrarian change in Southeast Asia.[10] Their book represented an attempt to rethink approaches to agrarian change in the light of empirical and theoretical concerns that were emerging in the 1980s. These included: the recognition of power in various forms and not just relations of production; the need for local-level studies to understand the specifics of agrarian transitions in particular places, while at the same time remaining cognizant of new forms of economic internationalization and globalism that were taking hold of agricultural production systems; the need to look beyond agrarian classes and class relations in order to recognize the importance (in some cases, even dominance) of nonfarm incomes and production processes; and, the need to address the intersection of gender and generation with class processes—thereby opening up the "household" to critical scrutiny.

While Hart et al. presaged a number of themes that have since been pursued vigorously, conceptual debate has also moved on. In the broadest sense, we now see rather less enthusiasm for generating grand narratives of historical transformation— Gillian Hart's call for attention to local specificity has largely been heeded, but the wider point is that the ambitions of theory have been somewhat curtailed.[11] While providing a vocabulary for understanding specific cases, theory is now seldom used to imply a set of functional relations or a predictive model of historical change. Nor are theoretical categories taken for granted—instead, such instruments of knowledge construction are closely interrogated. As Ben White noted in 1989:

> There is no universal or all-purpose "agrarian question" awaiting investigation, nor is there any universal form of "agrarian differentiation"…; the search for all-purpose definitions of these notions, or a universally right way to analyze them in particular contexts, is as fruitless and unnecessary an exercise as the search for universal definitions of the "peasantry" who are supposed to constitute the "question" and to undergo or resist the "differentiation" process.[12]

While abstracting ambitions have waned, a quite separate debate concerning how larger-scale processes are manifested in, constituted through, and affected by local-scale processes has developed considerably. Geographical literature on the production of space, place, and scale has refined the idea of a global–local dialectic of this kind.[13] Moving beyond attention to the interplay between local and global, *space* is understood as socially produced, *place* represents a unique intersection of processes at multiple scales, and *scales* are seen as "nested," rather than hierarchical, and produced, rather than naturally given. The (in retrospect, perhaps rather intuitive) corollary is that changes in agrarian settings are the result of a wide range of processes including global commodity chain

10. Hart, Turton, and White 1989.
11. Hart 1989.
12. White 1989, 17–18.
13. Massey 2005; Hart 2006.

structures, international regulatory frameworks, national agricultural policies, local political power relations, microscale household dynamics, and the particular configurations and features of natural assets in a specific place. In all of these ways, local histories and geographies serve to mediate processes operating at multiple scales.

Closely linked to both a refined understanding of the spatiality of capitalism and globalization, we now have a more developed conceptualization of the ways in which economies are regulated. It is recognized that neither capitalism nor its contemporary global spatiality simply happen; they are, rather, authored, created, managed, regulated, and institutionalized. This process of regulation applies to global migrations as much as it does to commodity chains or capital flows, and it involves state, supra-state, and non-state actors. These actors might include government agencies and programs promoting internal or international migration, recruitment, and consultancy firms that facilitate the process, and bilateral or multilateral agreements concerning the recruitment and treatment of international migrants.[14]

Related to the careful attention to regulation and institutions has been a growing recognition that economic processes are embedded in their social and cultural contexts. Identity and economy are now recognized to be inseparable. People live their lives (and likely have always done so) with far richer and more varied meanings than labels such as peasant, proletarian, or landless laborer would allow for. Indeed these categories, derived from economic relations, may not define the motivations or interests of those who bear such labels as they themselves do. It is now *de rigeur* to explore the intersections of class with other dimensions of identity, to examine how economic roles are performed rather than pre-given and to think about how consumption might drive economic life as much as production. Feminist scholarship has been especially influential in this respect.[15]

These new theoretical sensibilities are put to work when analyzing processes of migration in relation to agrarian transitions. The agrarian literature has tended to view rural social change as occurring within an in-situ population. Looking back, for example, to Ben Kerkvliet's landmark study of agrarian class and politics in Central Luzon, it now seems remarkable that overseas work and remittances barely warrant a mention.[16] But in the Philippines and across Southeast Asia, populations are now not only more mobile—as commuters, sojourners, and emigrants—but they are also more able to maintain connections between "home" and "host" locations than ever before. In the process, new spatialities are brought to bear upon rural life, new livelihoods are forged, and new identities take shape.[17]

14. In the Philippine case, see, for example, Onuki 2009; Tyner 2009.
15. Gibson-Graham 1996; Butler 1990; McKay 1999.
16. Kerkvliet 1990.
17. Borras 2009.

Southeast Asian Migrations

Contemporary international migration continues a long history of movement in, to, and from Southeast Asia. Indeed, it has been argued that the relatively short periods of restricted migration in some contexts during the latter half of the twentieth century can be seen as temporary anomalies in a history that is characterized overwhelmingly by mobility.[18] There are, however, grounds for arguing that the contemporary era of migration is rather different. First, state regulation of migration is much closer in terms of regulating the flows of migrants, enforcing (or selectively not enforcing) punishments and deportations against irregular migrants, and the increasing prevalence of multilateral and bilateral agreements on migration. Second, the nature of contemporary communications, transportation, and money transfer facilities means that migrant workers are much more closely connected (socially, financially, and physically) with their places of origin. Third, an unprecedented density of media saturation facilitates information flows and controversies about the role of migrant workers in host labor markets and the abuse of migrant workers when they occur. Thus migrant workers and their issues are now far more visible.

Migration encompasses a range of movements, varying in duration, distance, legality, employment prospects, citizenship rights, and gendering. Any one of these dimensions might provide a useful typology. In developing a basic mapping of major Southeast Asian migration flows, however, we can categorize them into five simple types of movement: trans-continental permanent emigrations; regional temporary flows (encompassing Southeast, South, and East Asia, and the Middle East); intra-national migrations between rural and urban areas, and sometimes back again; intra-national and cross-border rural–rural flows; and, finally, expanded forms of everyday mobility among nonmigrant villagers.

Transcontinental Permanent Flows

All parts of Southeast Asia have been sources for permanent migration flows to settler societies—predominantly the major immigrant-receiving countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. The most significant flows, however, are from Vietnam and the Philippines. Vietnam has a diaspora estimated to number approximately 3 million—of whom about 2 million were born in Vietnam and left after 1975.[19] The diaspora of overseas Filipinos, who have permanent residency in other countries, numbers perhaps 4 to 5 million (although some are now second, third, or even fourth generations, especially in the United States). The importance of these communities lies in the ties and commitments they still maintain to their "homelands," manifested in remittances, investments, visits, and possibly even resettlement for retirement. It is also important to note that in some cases large-scale permanent migrations are not just a vestige of the past—in 2010, the Philippines became Canada's largest single country source of immigrants, overtaking sources such

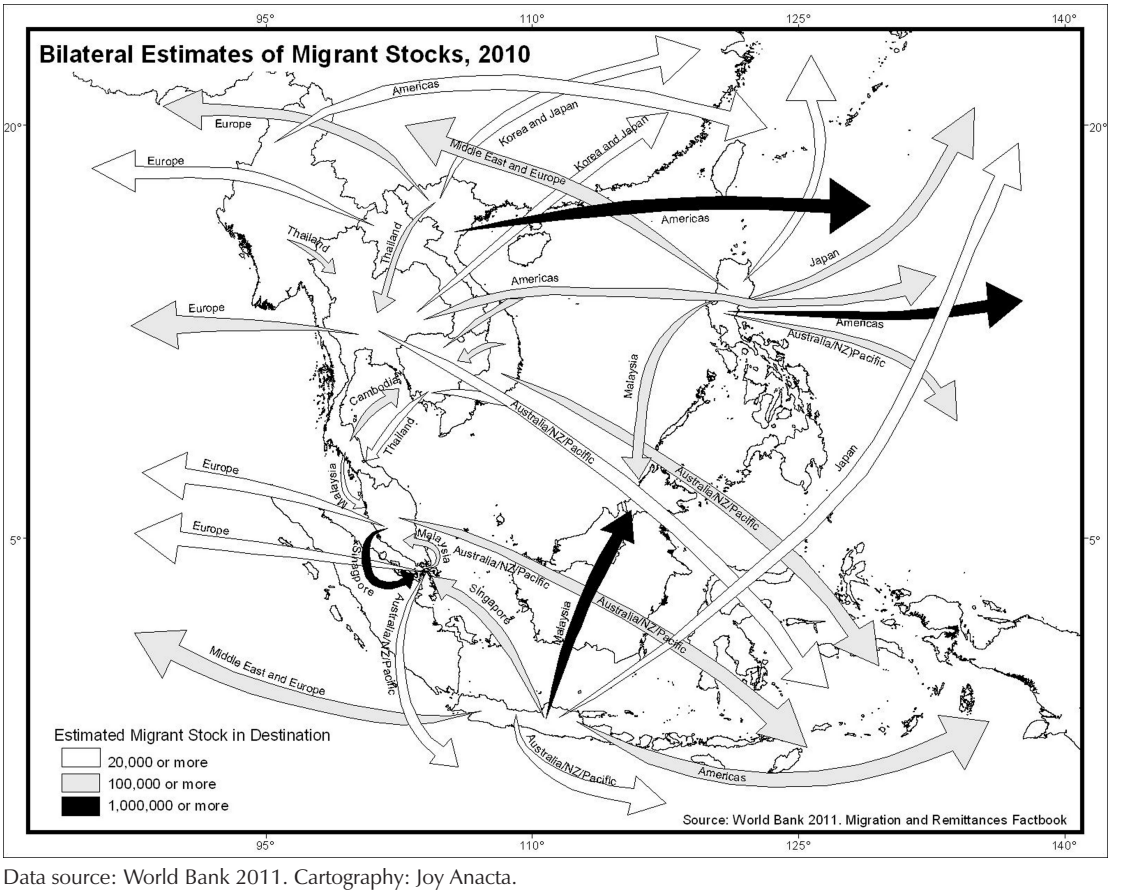
18. Goss and Linquist 2000.
19. IOM 2008.

as India and China.

Regional Temporary Flows

Regional migration for temporary contract work involves movement either within Southeast Asia or to other countries in East Asia or the Middle East. Major flows include: Filipinos to Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and the Middle East; Indonesians to Malaysia, Singapore, and the Middle East; Malaysians and Thais to Singapore and Taiwan; and Laos and Burmese to Thailand. Within Southeast Asia, two distinct "systems" might be identified—one a "peninsular" system, focused on Thailand as a labor-absorbing economy with a relatively high standard of living; the other an "insular" system, where workers are drawn into the agricultural, industrial, and urban service sectors of Malaysia and Singapore. It is also important to note that while these flows are recorded as international flows, they are usually more geographically specific in their linking of particular subnational source areas with particular destination sites—either because of proximity across a border or because of recruiting networks. It is also worth noting that many workers may be temporary or illegal in a technical sense, but are in reality "permanently temporary"—the 2006 population census in Sabah, for

Fig. 1. Southeast Asian migration flows, based on the World Bank's bilateral estimates of migrant stocks, 2010



Data source: World Bank 2011. Cartography: Joy Anacta.

example, recorded more than 100,000 stateless Filipinos living there, mostly children of migrants.[20]

Table 1 (page 488) provides an attempt, albeit highly imperfect, to develop a composite picture of international migrations from Southeast Asian countries. Based on data compiled by the World Bank using both national censuses and other sources, the table indicates the estimated stock of migrants in 2010 from each Southeast Asian country who reside elsewhere in the region, in East Asia, and in other parts of the world. The data are clearly inaccurate—for example, no Filipinos are recorded in Singapore, when the Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimated that 163,000 lived there in 2009; the many Southeast Asian migrants in Taiwan and Hong Kong are not recorded; and the data improbably recorded more Thais in Cambodia than Cambodians in Thailand. Nevertheless, these data do give a sense of some of the major migration systems in the region, and figure 1 (above) shows these flows graphically.

Given the inaccuracies involved in such official statistics, they represent only the beginning of an analysis of cross-border migration in Southeast Asia, so it is worth noting some of the significant regional flows that have been estimated from other sources. It is thought that 140,000 refugees from Burma currently live in camps in Thailand, and that there are perhaps 2 million Burmese in Thailand as a whole.[21] Three quarters of the 2 million have irregular status due to limited access, high costs, and long processing times involved in applying for formal government travel documents. The effects of this movement in Myanmar itself are difficult to assess (the country's last census was conducted in 1983). The effect in Thailand, however, where migrants are drawn into employment in agriculture, fisheries, construction, and domestic work, is a high degree of vulnerability in the labor market and in workplaces (as Sai Latt's article in this collection makes clear).[22]

Similar to the Burmese situation, the time and cost involved in obtaining formal documents mean that many Cambodian and Lao migrants work illegally in Thailand. While programs to regularize these workers have come and gone, in many cases the numbers would seem to suggest that many migrants register once, if at all, and then often fail to renew their work permits. After a registration drive in Thailand in 2004, work permits were issued to 849,552 unregistered foreign workers, and a further 705,293 in 2005. In 2006, only 460,014 renewals were issued.[23]

A World Bank study estimated that 37 percent of educated Laotians live abroad, giving the country the fifth highest rate of brain drain worldwide.[24] Most Laotians enter Thailand voluntarily but with irregular status. Estimates of the Lao population in Thailand are unreliable, but the 2004 registration drive enrolled almost 180,000 Lao; 105,259 were subsequently granted work permits.

20. Ibid.
21. Maclean 2004.
22. Latt 2011; IOM 2008.
23. IOM 2008.
24. Schiff and Ozden 2005.

Table 1. Bilateral Estimates of Migrant Stocks in 2010

Destination country/region (across) - Source country (down)	**Middle East**	**Europe**	**Americas**	**Australia/ NZ/Pacific**	Brunei	Cambodia	Japan	Korea, Rep.	Lao PDR	Malaysia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Timor-Leste	*Other Locations*	**TOTAL**	Migrant stock living overseas as % of national population
Brunei		**4,577**	**6,012**	**3,465**	0	0	30	0	0	7,905	1,003	0	0	0	1,352	**24,343**	6.1
Cambodia	**0**	**78,764**	**172,507**	**36,569**	0	0	2,503	3,053	909	0	232	0	49,750	0	6,197	**350,485**	2.4
Indonesia	**380,717**	**194,959**	**102,663**	**73,448**	6,727	505	25,916	15,861	0	1,397,684	5,865	102,332	1,459	12,148	184,013	**2,504,297**	1.1
Lao PDR	**0**	**53,635**	**209,875**	**12,333**	0	1,235	2,603	0	0	0	0	0	77,443	0	9,540	**366,663**	5.8
Malaysia	**5,082**	**87,613**	**80,792**	**135,327**	81,576	816	8,043	1,252	0	0	394	1,060,628	3,429	0	16,251	**1,481,202**	5.4
Myanmar	**0**	**16,801**	**69,631**	**16,794**	0	247	6,813	2,153	143	17,034	415	0	288,487	0	96,149	**514,667**	1.0
Philippines	**967,991**	**421,021**	**2,072,935**	**226,319**	15,861	728	204,929	28,700	0	277,444	0	0	3,360	251	56,074	**4,275,612**	4.6
Singapore	**232**	**53,472**	**52,147**	**58,184**	3,033	581	2,510	0	0	103,318	288	0	2,134	0	21,336	**297,234**	5.9
Thailand	**24,404**	**196,963**	**214,500**	**46,995**	13,381	142,767	41,861	21,217	916	79,604	150	0	0	0	28,365	**811,123**	1.2
Timor-Leste	**0**	**19**	**50**	**11,171**	0	0	9	0	0	0	2,138	0	0	0	3,422	**16,810**	1.5
Vietnam	**0**	**362,621**	**1,347,007**	**204,042**	0	173,694	37,285	44,908	8,167	0	748	0	22,156	0	25,772	**2,226,401**	2.6

Source: Calculated from Bilateral Migrant Stock Tables in World Bank 2011

Of those registered, about one third are domestic workers, while two thirds work in agriculture and construction.

Although a significant source of migrants to Thailand, Cambodia is also home to an estimated 1 million Vietnamese. In 2002, only around 70,000 of the migrants were registered; many were employed informally in the construction sector or sex industry (many of the latter having been trafficked).[25]

Thailand is a source as well as a destination, deploying about 140,000 to 180,000 contract workers each year. In 2007, 20 percent went to the Middle East (a significant number locating in Israel rather than in the oil-rich Gulf states), and 67 percent were deployed in Asia. Of these, half went to Taiwan. Reflecting their employment in construction and industrial sectors, men accounted for 85 percent of all Thai overseas contract workers.[26]

Vietnam's global diaspora was noted earlier (and translates into a significant flow of remittances), but its most important flow is now for contract labor. The annual deployments have grown steadily from 22,000 in 1999 to 79,000 in 2006. Primary destinations are Malaysia, Taiwan, and Korea.[27]

In 2006 over 1.8 million registered migrant workers—two thirds of them Indonesian—were located in Malaysia as a whole.[28] The numbers in the registered and unregistered categories vary over time due to periodic crackdowns, but Graziano Battistella[29] estimates that, in 2001, 587,000 Filipinos were working in Sabah; 381,000 of them had regular work permits. As Derek Hall notes, by 2008 an estimated 200,000 legal and 134,000 illegal Indonesian workers were in Sabah.[30] For Indonesians in Malaysia overall, Graeme Hugo contends that this flow of undocumented migrants might be the second largest in the world (after the Mexico–U.S. border)—much of it from Sumatra and Java to West Malaysia and from other parts of Indonesia to Sabah and Sarawak.[31]

The large number of overseas contract workers from the Philippines has become a well-known phenomenon. The country has by far the most developed system of institutionalized contract worker deployment in the region. The data in table 1 places the current number of Filipinos living outside the Philippines at approximately 4.2 million, although estimates vary depending on whether subsequent generations born abroad are counted and whether an attempt is made to estimate undocumented workers. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas provides a 2009 estimate of 8.5 million, including 4 million permanent emigrants, 3.8 million temporary contract workers, and about 650,000 undocumented or irregular workers.[32] These workers are widely dispersed in labor-importing countries and sectors around the world, as well as in the global shipping industry. Across the Philippines over 7 percent of households

25. IOM 2008.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Battistella 2002.
30. Hall 2011.
31. Hugo 2002.
32. CFO 2010.

depend on remittances for their primary source of income.[33] For many more, remittances provide an important supplementary source. Filipino contract workers are generally not employed in agrarian settings (with the exception of plantations in Sabah) but their remittances have significant effects in rural areas of the Philippines (which account for two thirds of Filipino overseas workers). Research has shown that the effects of remittances on rural areas range from the reworking of household gender relations, to new cropping patterns, to inflated land markets that create pressure for land use conversion.[34]

Indonesia has also started to formally deploy contract workers overseas in large numbers. Overseas worker flows reached a new high of 712,160 in 2007. A distinctive feature (in contrast to Thai deployments) has been the proportion of women among the migrants: women accounted for 75.3 percent of the flow of Indonesian workers going abroad in 2006. Principal destinations included Malaysia, the Middle East, and Taiwan. The total stock of Indonesians working overseas was estimated at 4.3 million in 2007.[35]

Sitting as something of a central nexus in the regional migration system is Singapore. In December 2008, 36 percent of the 2.95 million persons employed in the city-state of Singapore were foreigners (1,057,700).[36] Although Singapore has promoted itself as "talent magnet," most migrants are employed in low-paid construction, manufacturing, service, and domestic work.

Intra-national Rural–Urban Movements

A fundamental component of the agrarian transition has been the increasing urbanization of populations—either through movement to cities, the expansion of cities into extended metropolitan regions, or the diversification of livelihoods and lifestyles in ostensibly "rural" settings. The movement of migrants to cities and to peri-urban areas has been a feature in all Southeast Asian contexts.

In 2008, more than 45 percent of Southeast Asians lived in areas designated as urban. The UN predicts that this figure is likely to rise to over 55 percent by 2030.[37] In some cases, development in rural areas (for example new export-oriented industrial estates in "green field" sites) has led to the in situ urbanization of rural areas, creating mega-urban regions or desakota;[38] in others, the suburbanization of the countryside has been driven by the outward expansion of commuter zones.

Table 2 indicates the percentage of national population living in Southeast Asian urban areas over the last four decades. Although not an accurate proxy for rural–urban migration, the table does show where rural to urban migration has

33. Kelly 2009.
34. See, for example, McKay 2003, 2005; Pingol 2001; and Lukasiewicz 2011.
35. World Bank 2007.
36. Government of Singapore 2009.
37. United Nations 2004.
38. McGee 1991. "Desakota" is a term defined by Canadian geographer T. McGee. It comes from Indonesian (*desa* means "village" and *kota* means "city") and characterizes the original form of large cities in Asia.

Table 2. Percentage Urban Population, 1970–2010[39]

Country	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Brunei Darussalam	61.7	59.9	65.8	71.1	75.7
Cambodia	16.0	9	12.6	16.9	22.8
Indonesia	17.1	22.1	30.6	42.0	53.7
Lao PDR	9.6	12.4	15.4	22.0	33.2
Malaysia	33.5	42	49.8	62.0	72.2
Myanmar	22.8	24	24.9	28.0	33.9
Philippines	33.0	37.5	48.8	58.5	66.4
Singapore	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Thailand	20.9	26.8	29.4	31.1	34.0
Timor-Leste	12.9	16.5	20.8	24.3	28.1
Vietnam	18.3	19.2	20.3	24.3	28.8

Table 3: Jakarta's Recent and Lifetime Migrants, 1980–2005

	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005
Population of DKI Jakarta	6,503,449	8,259,266	9,112,652	8,389,443	-
Recent migrants (last 5 years) in DKI Jakarta	766,363	833,029	594,542	702,202	575,173
Recent migrants (last 5 years) as percentage of population	11.8%	10.1%	6.5%	8.4%	-
Lifetime migrants to DKI Jakarta	2,599,367	3,170,215	3,371,384	3,541,972	3,337,161
Lifetime migrants as percentage of population	40.0%	38.38%	37.0%	42.2%	-

Source: Calculated from BPS data: dds.bps.go.id; accessed 1 July 2011

been most significant. Urbanization trends have been particularly dramatic in Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, East Timor, and the Philippines.

Taking Jakarta for example, table 3 shows the number of lifetime and recent migrants (meaning those who migrated at any time during their lives and those who arrived in the city in the previous five years, respectively) in DKI Jakarta. Recent migrants have fluctuated between 6 and 12 percent of the urban population, but their numbers suggest an annual flow of well over 100,000 in-migrants (not all, of course, from rural areas). Jakarta's migrant population as a whole—those who were born elsewhere in the country and had therefore migrated to the city during their lifetime—has consistently numbered over 3 million over the last two decades.

39. UN 2007. Note that the 2010 figures are a projection from the most recent census in each country.

National and Cross-border Rural–Rural Flows

One consequence of urbanization and the diversification of rural livelihoods in some locations (notably extended metropolitan regions) has been a labor shortage in agricultural activities at home. In the Philippines, for example, migrant agricultural workers from other regions of the country have arrived in Manila's peri-urban region in the last ten to twenty years, either settling permanently or circulating seasonally, to work in rice and vegetable farming.[40] This kind of internal seasonal migration on various scales has a long history and in all cases reflects the difference in labor demand and earnings between source and destination areas.

Another form of rural–rural migration is the settlement (or resettlement) of agricultural "frontiers" with migrants from other national regions. Indonesia's "Transmigrasi" program is an obvious example, but the movement of lowland Vietnamese into highland areas represents another state-programmed migration scheme. The Central Highlands region of Vietnam, for example, saw its population increase from 3.4 million in 1995 to 5.1 million in 2009.[41] Indeed, in Vietnam rural–rural migration has at times exceeded rural–urban migration. Using the country's 1999 census to analyze migration between 1994 and 1999, Dang Nguyen Anh et al. show that rural–rural migration amounted to 1.6 million people, while rural–urban migration was 1.2 million.[42]

Populations displaced by new forms of rural development such as plantation development and infrastructure projects are another important source of migrants. Finally, it is important to note that some forms of displacement are forced rather than voluntary. Movements across the Burma–Thai border were noted earlier, but military action in Burma itself has caused many displacements. One estimate in the early 2000s calculated that internal conflict in Burma was responsible for the uprooting of between 600,000 and 1 million individuals.[43]

Data on internal rural–rural migration is difficult to obtain, but Thailand's Migration Survey does indicate the magnitude of the phenomenon. Table 4 shows data based on four such surveys from 1994 to 2009. What is most striking is that migrants into rural areas represent at least two thirds of total internal migrants; migrants between rural areas have also been a significant component of flows (and a majority in the 1990s). Indeed, migration between rural areas would appear to far exceed migration from rural to urban areas.[44]

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40. Kelly 2000; Payton 2010.
41. General Statistics Office of Vietnam: www.gso.gov.vn; accessed 1 July 2011.
42. Anh et al. 2003.
43. Maclean 2004.
44. Although, as noted beneath the table, these figures are partly an artifact of definitional issues, since the "municipal" vs. "nonmunicipal" distinction does not fully reflect a rural–urban distinction. Indeed some of what appears to be rural–rural movement may effectively be rural–urban movements as people are moving to nonmunicipal areas adjacent to municipal areas.

Table 4. Migration patterns in Thailand, by rural/urban areas, 1994–2009*

	1994	1997	2004	2009
Rural to rural migrants	1,276,921	1,247,293	1,220,382	545,652
as percentage of total migrants	44%	41%	30%	28%
Rural to urban migrants	438,175	424,844	685,547	237,589
as percentage of total migrants	15%	14%	17%	12%
Urban to urban migrants	200,286	226,510	733,601	299,363
as percentage of total migrants	7%	7%	18%	15%
Urban to rural migrants	976,648	1,173,868	1,408,288	858,132
as percentage of total migrants	34%	38%	35%	44%
Total internal migration	**2,892,030**	**3,072,515**	**4,047,818**	**1,940,736**

* Note: These data are calculated from migration surveys conducted by Thailand's National Statistical Office. The surveys differentiate present and previous residence in "municipal" and "nonmunicipal" areas. In this table these categories are used as a proxy for "rural" and "urban" settings. It should be noted that this assumption is not always accurate, as Gavin Jones (2002) has pointed out; some relatively large settlements (in excess of 20,000 people) still retain the "nonmunicipal" designation. Thanks to Jonathan Rigg for pointing me to Jones's commentary on this.

Everyday Mobility

While both inward and outward international migrations have been intensifying in rural Southeast Asia, researchers have also noted the increased level of everyday mobility that those still living in village settings experience.[45] This mobility, which better transportation infrastructure and more widespread ownership of vehicles facilitates, enables more frequent and faster contact with regional centers and major cities through everyday commuting and travel.

The extent of changes in rural mobility is much harder to assess than international (or even internal) migrations that involve a change of residence, but road construction and vehicle ownership provide proxy indicators of its dimensions. In Indonesia, Doug Johnston calculates that in 1976–77 just 14.2 percent of rural villages were accessed along asphalt roads.[46] By 1993, access had risen to 47.3 percent. Over the same period the proportion of villages serviced by motorized public transport increased from 45.6 percent to 77.5 percent.

Figures for road construction from across the region suggest that this process of intensified rural connectivity has continued. Table 5 (page 494) shows the expansion of road networks in Southeast Asia between the 1990s and 2000s. In several countries, the length of road networks has more than doubled in just over a decade.

Vehicle ownership is another proxy for spatial mobility (although the data available do not differentiate between ownership in urban and rural settings). Between 1960 and 2002, vehicle ownership rates increased more than tenfold in several Southeast Asian countries—from 2.1 to 29 vehicles per 1000 people in Indonesia, from 25 to 240 per 1000 people in Malaysia, and from 4 to 127 per

45. See Hew 2011; Mills forthcoming; and Rigg and Salamanca 2011.
46. Johnston 2007.

Table 5. Total road network (km) in Southeast Asian countries, 1990–2003/6

Country	Kms of road in 1990	Kms of road in 2003–2006	Percentage change
Cambodia	35,800	38,257	6.9%
Indonesia	288,727	391,009	35.4%
Lao PDR	13,971	33,861	142.4%
Malaysia	53,985	93,109	72.5%
Philippines	160,558	200,037	24.6%
Thailand	72,170	180,053	149.5%
Vietnam	96,100	222,179	131.2%

Source: Calculated from World Bank, "World Development Indicators": databank.worldbank.org/; accessed 1 July 2011.

1000 in Thailand.[47] Perhaps an even more pertinent statistic for many rural areas, the number of motorbikes registered in Indonesia increased from 12.6 million in 1998 to 47.6 million in 2008.[48]

The increased mobility facilitated by rural road construction and improvement has long been recognized and has been a centerpiece of rural development strategies. Jill Windle and Rob Cramb, for example, have studied the effects of road construction on remote rural communities in Sarawak.[49] They find that increased connectivity has had an impact on agricultural production, nonagricultural employment, and income, although these were more affected when road access was to a major city (such as Kuching) than to a smaller market town. Road access may also be a precursor to other forms of mobility. Hence Windle and Cramb have determined that households in communities in Sarawak with good access to roads are far more likely to have remittance income as part of their livelihood.

Migration and Agrarian Transitions

In the context of the conceptual perspectives outlined earlier, and the empirical processes of migration just described, what does all of this mean for how we approach the question of agrarian transition? At the outset, it is fairly clear that migration can be an outcome of agrarian transitions. In her article on Sarawak, for example, Hew Cheng Sim shows how land and forest policies, and especially the increasing pressure on forest land and the development of large-scale private plantations, have accelerated rural–urban migration.[50] Migration is, however, more than an outcome of agrarian transitions—it is also a driver of change in rural areas. But there is little predictability in either the causes or the outcomes of migration. As Jonathan Rigg notes:

47. Dargay et al. 2007.
48. Government of Indonesia, Badan Pusat Statistik: dds.bps.go.id; accessed 1 July 2011.
49. Windle and Cramb 1997; see also Yamauchi et al. 2009 on Indonesia.
50. Hew 2011.

> Migration may be propelled by poverty, and encouraged by wealth; it may reflect resource scarcities at the local level, or be an outcome of prosperity; it may be embedded in economic transformations, or better explained by social and cultural changes; it may narrow inequalities in source communities, or widen them; it may tighten bonds of reciprocity between migrants and their natal households, or it may serve to loosen or break these bonds; it may help to support agricultural production, or it may be a means to break away from farming altogether.[51]

In this collection we identify six broad ways in which migration both derives from, and drives, processes of agrarian transition.

1. Migrant Labor and Agrarian Relations of Production

Migration into rural areas brings new supplies of agrarian labor, but it is often labor with very different sets of entitlements than those afforded to local workers. As outsiders to the village setting, migrants do not necessarily enjoy the "privileges of membership." Furthermore, existing village social networks and practices may be undermined by in-migration. Tight-knit communities that have not previously seen much in-migration may be unraveled by a growing sense of anomie.[52] More importantly, as individuals marginalized under national citizenship regimes, international migrants provide a vulnerable population—vulnerable to intense disciplinary relationships with employers and to governmental threats of violence and deportation. Migration has, then, in some instances facilitated the creation of a disenfranchised rural underclass.

Sai Latt illustrates this point in relation to the use of migrant labor on Royal projects in northern Thailand.[53] Ostensibly a success of "national" development, the narrative of the projects' successes erases the role of Shan/Burmese migrants. These workers are disenfranchised through their designation as "illegal" by the Thai legal and citizenship regime, but they provide an essential, flexible, and low-cost workforce that permits certain kinds of production relations and the intensification of production (including a "greening" of production for organic marketing) that would not otherwise be viable. Derek Hall similarly notes the precarious and often abusive nature of employment relationships in the Malaysian oil palm sector, where the state's approach to undocumented workers amounts to "search-identify-detain-arrest-fine-whip-deport."[54]

Hall's article also shows, however, the diverse power relations between migrants and those already in situ.[55] Focusing on crop booms in various times and places, he suggests that they have developed hand in hand with migration flows, which might take one of three forms. First, spontaneous movement by smallholders to frontier sites of agricultural expansion—frontiers not, it should

51. Rigg 2007, 163.
52. Kelly 2000.
53. Latt 2011.
54. Chin 2009; cited by Hall 2011.
55. Hall 2011.

be noted, in the sense that they are previously unoccupied or unused. Examples include cocoa in Sulawesi and coffee in Vietnam. Second, migration by waged laborers who follow opportunities created by agricultural expansions—such as the large-scale migrations noted earlier by Indonesians and Filipinos to work on Malaysian oil palm plantations. Third, movement by state-sponsored migrants whose relocation to peripheral locations may be based as much on political as economic motives (e.g., Indonesia's transmigration program). While in the second of these cases, migrants may provide a compliant and inexpensive workforce, in the first and third cases, migrants move with the sanction of the state from lowlands to uplands, from core to periphery, or from dominant ethnic group to minority areas, often with claims (underwritten by the central state) on resources in their settlement sites.[56]

A quite different form of in-migration to rural areas is the return of rural–urban migrants to their rural places of origin, especially during economic hard times. Rachel Silvey and Rebecca Elmhirst's work in Indonesia following the 1997–98 monetary crisis has shown that a variety of power relations may shape the ways in which such workers are reincorporated into the "rural safety net," not least the pervading expectations associated with particular gender identities.[57]

2. Remittances as Agricultural Capital

In some instances, the financial remittances migrants from rural areas send home represent a significant capital input into agrarian smallholder production. Just how important this might be is unclear. In the 1980s, Cynthia Banzon-Bautista found that capital derived from earnings abroad, especially in the Middle East, represented a major source of funds to purchase farm land and farm machinery in her case study site in the Philippines.[58] Deirdre McKay describes cases from the 1990s where remittances appear to have reworked the landscape through the adoption of new crops, or where new crops have been planted in order to raise funds to cover the costs of migration.[59] Remittances might also be used to expand nonfarm employment in rural areas, as in the cases Katherine Gibson, Lisa Law, and Deirdre McKay recount in the Philippines.[60]

The role of remittances as investment capital has been the subject of growing attention from international financial institutions and development agencies.[61] While it is certainly the case that remittance flows have increased rapidly worldwide in recent years, and that these may have significant effects at the household level, it is still unclear what role such funds play in capitalizing agriculture and other productive ventures in rural areas. Adam Lukasiewicz's article in this collection shows that remittances may indeed be channeled toward agricultural expansion and intensification. He explains that this process involves a rework-

56. See also Li 2002, on Sulawesi.
57. Silvey and Elmhirst 2003.
58. Banzon-Bautista 1989.
59. McKay 2003.
60. Gibson, Law, and McKay 2001; see also Gibson-Graham 2005.

Rice planting in the Philippines: relationships with the land have traditionally been the basis for rural class relations. (Credit: P.F. Kelly)

ing of gender identities as female spouses are left by their migrant husbands to manage farm production and labor.[62]

3. Effects of Migration on Rural Inequality and Class Structure

Important questions arise concerning both who migrates and how migration affects local class mobility. In some cases it is only wealthier families who can muster the resources needed to finance both the education and recruitment costs of a formalized overseas labor contract. In the Philippines, it is seldom the poorest who can afford a sojourn overseas. In Laos, though, Keith Barney shows that it is the poorer families whose members will risk informal migration to work in rural areas across the border in Thailand.[63] The answer to the question "who migrates," then, is contingent on the place and the type of migration.

The effect of out-migration on local class mobility is not, however, predictable. In some areas (especially in the Philippines) the benefits accruing from a successful international deployment can catapult a family into a greatly elevated position. Indeed migration, rather than land ownership, may, in some places, become the marker of a superior class position.[64] Bernadette Resurreccion and Ha Thi Van Khanh note the same phenomenon in the context of rural–urban

61. World Bank 2006.
62. Lukasiewicz 2011.
63. Barney forthcoming.
64. Aguilar 2009.

migration in Vietnam: "Migrant earnings in the city therefore make a real difference in rural life: they establish new stratifying indices of modern living and social status, indeed defining the migration option not only as necessary for their survival, but also as profoundly desirable."[65]

Clearly, then, socioeconomic class can be reworked in the process of migration; but this raises further questions. First, the types of changes that result depend very much on the migration in question and its success. In some instances international migration can be disastrous if land has been mortgaged to finance a migration that ends badly through unscrupulous recruiters, abusive employers, or legal problems in the host country. The result may in fact be dramatic downward mobility. In cases where migration results from deception, trafficking, or abduction, clearly the processes are disastrous for the individual and family involved even from the outset.[66]

Second, as noted above, migration to higher earnings may lead to mobility into (or within) a land-owning class, i.e., mobility within a class hierarchy that is rooted in relations of production. Lukasiewicz points out that in his case study of Lucban in the Philippines remittances have frequently been used to expand land holdings or other agrarian activities (such as pig raising).[67] In some cases this has involved left-behind relatives learning new kinds of production methods and redefining their gender-specific roles in the production process. Where land holdings have been expanded the enlargement has been based on the productive and income potential of the land. The value of the land as an investment is another contributing factor. Undoubtedly this is with a view to the possible future uses of the land (including nonagricultural uses). These expanded land holdings have also led to the use of waged labor, as families are no longer able to satisfy their labor requirements. Lukasiewicz shows that managing this waged labor has been another instance of redefined gender roles resulting from absent husbands.[68] Here, then, we see class mobility as movement within an agrarian structure of production relations, as migrants' families move from tenant to owner and from user of family labor to employer of waged labor.

A third possibility is that the meaning of class itself is reworked because of migration. This can happen in two senses. First, as Gibson, Law, and McKay point out, a semifeudal employment relationship for a domestic worker in Hong Kong may yield enough to propel a woman into the ranks of landowners and moneylenders in her home village.[69] Thus the same individual may experience different class processes in different places. A second sense in which overseas migration reworks class is that the relation to the means of production in the village is no longer a predictor of social status and economic well-being. The socioeconomic hierarchy in a village becomes disconnected from local relations of production. Clearly, a class structure of uneven wealth exists, but it is

65. Resurreccion and Khanh 2007, 218.
66. ILO 2006.
67. Lukasiewicz 2011.
68. Ibid.
69. Gibson, Law, and McKay 2001. See also White 1989, 21.

not based upon agrarian, or even local nonfarm, activities—it may instead be based on migration. The costs of migrating in the first place might mean that migration accentuates existing class differentiation (which is agrarian-based) rather than altogether reformulating such differentiation; but once created, the separation means that land ownership becomes rather meaningless.

A further consequence of overseas remittances may be to drive demand for house lots in new subdivisions, either as investments or as places to live after returning home. Either way, demand for new residential land drives the process of land conversion and the de-agrarianization of some locations.[70]

While these scenarios are all identifiable in some instances, in other cases a less dramatic reality prevails, as Arjan De Haan and Ben Rogaly observe.[71] Evidence from their research shows remittances affect, but do not radically transform, poor areas. Similarly in the specific case of Thailand, Huw Jones and Liwa Pardthaisong conclude that working abroad is "sometimes life-enhancing, but rarely life-changing."[72]

4. Migration and Cultural Change

Migration is a process that can disrupt lives in profound ways: for those migrating, those they settle amongst, and for those left behind. In some instances, the very act of migration has taken on a profound cultural significance.[73] Filomeno Aguilar captures this idea with his notion of overseas migration as a rite of passage, a process of suffering suffused with the promise of ultimate fulfillment.[74] In less dramatic, but no less important, terms, Mary Beth Mills's article in this collection argues that even short term day trips from rural areas in Thailand (sometimes to "consume" other rural areas) are rendered significant because of the cultural citizenship and distinction they bring to rural residents who are otherwise constructed as being outside of the Thai national project of modernity.[75] Tubtim's article also highlights the complexity of the relationship between urban and rural.[76] She describes a striking example on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, where wealthier urbanites have moved to live in rural areas and consume a rural landscape. The result, however, is often a clash of cultures that is based on aesthetic evaluations of the countryside rather than struggles rooted in traditional relations of production.

Perhaps the most profound cultural dimensions of the migration process (and its intersection with agrarian change) concern gendered and generational roles and identities. Hew shows how migration is highly differentiated along both of these axes. Children in Sarawak who are educated away from village life do not pick up skills for, or get socialized into, farming processes. When women

70. Kelly 2000.
71. De Haan and Rogaly 2002.
72. Jones and Pardthaisong 1998, 35.
73. Kelly and Lusis 2006.
74. Aguilar 1999.
75. See also Mills 1999, on rural migrants to the city who consume distant regions of the country based on their natural beauty, historic significance or ethnic otherness; Mills forthcoming.
76. Tubtim forthcoming.

have migrated to urban centers, they do not appear to have found new liberating gender roles; rather the move has rendered them more vulnerable to patriarchal power than they had experienced as autonomous farmers at home. Migration by men, on the other hand, has left women behind and the emergence of new gender identities, such as the Indai Blue (a sort of rural sex worker whom Hew describes as "exploited by affluent men, despised by other women, and stigmatized by the community at large"[77]).

Household relations more broadly may be redefined by migration. The household has been recognized as a unit with internal gender- and generationally based power relations and processes of surplus extraction. Migration can change these relations, but it can also radically change the spatiality of the household. Jonathan Rigg and Albert Salamanca make this point, arguing that Thai development writ large was facilitated in important ways by the flexibility of Thai householding practices.[78] Read this way, the cultural realm is neither a static set of norms, nor is it simply on the receiving end of economic change (driven by markets and technology). The adaptability of cultural practices also reworks households into multigenerational units and redefines appropriate roles for women and men. This emphasizes the point that culture and economy are inseparably interdependent rather than causally connected in one direction or another.

5. Institutionalizing Migration

Migration does not simply happen; it is shaped, managed, and institutionalized in a variety of ways. In some cases, institutionalization may involve grandiose schemes orchestrated by national governments (such as *Transmigrasi* in Indonesia or labor export in the Philippines). In others, institutionalization may take the form of social networks that channel migrants from particular places to particular destinations (and into particular jobs when they get there). Either way, migration is a process shaped at multiple scales and is far from the neoclassical ideal of an individual decision to move between two places based purely on an economic rationale.

More significantly, experiences of migration and the economic roles of migrants in their destination sites are also shaped by important legal and regulatory frameworks. Some of these might be formal and explicit—such as the bilateral migration agreements that have been signed between Southeast Asian countries in recent years.[79] But in other cases it is how national systems of rights and entitlements treat differences—of citizenship, ethnicity, religion, etc.—that gives significance to the role of migrants in a given setting. It is important to note that irregular, undocumented, or illegal workers are also far from being outside the purview of regulatory structures, as the ways in which states decide to deal with them (from ignoring them, to registering them, to punishing them) crucially shapes the roles they might play. Latt's article on disenfran-

77. Hew 2011.
78. Rigg and Salamanca 2011.
79. Hugo 2005.

Collective remittances from Filipinos in Los Angeles funded this rural elementary school house in Tanza, Cavite, Philippines. (Credit: P.F. Kelly)

chised and racialized Shan migrants in northern Thailand clearly illustrates this point, but state regimes of inclusion and exclusion equally applies to the varied contexts of smallholder or labor migration Derek Hall describes.[80]

6. Migration and Rural Politics

As noted earlier, a classic question in the agrarian transition literature revolves around the bases of class consciousness and political dissent in rural populations. Migration has three effects in this respect. First, in places where migrants comprise a large part of the agricultural labor force (as in the plantations Hall describes or in the Royal Project that Latt describes) then political dissent is effectively curtailed by the vulnerability of noncitizen aliens.

While migrant status might be disenfranchising in some instances, the cultural politics of being mobile or being a newcomer can sometimes be more multivalent, especially where internal migration is concerned. In her article in this collection, Elmhirst shows that legitimacy in occupying and cultivating land may be a shifting target for migrants, especially where discourses of legitimate livelihood activities change over time.[81] A response of rural migrants has been to enact "multi-local livelihood pathways" in order to respond to the marginality they face in places of settlement—in this case through Translok programs in Lampung, Indonesia, over the last twenty years.

Third, in cases where out-migration is an option exercised from rural areas—

80. Latt 2011; and Hall 2011.
81. Elmhirst forthcoming.

internationally in the case of the Philippines, nationally in the case of Indonesia—then discontent with the material quality of life in rural areas is curtailed (and, of course, such quality of life is materially improved if successful migrations lead to remittances flows). Indeed as long ago as 1968, Terry McGee and Warwick Armstrong suggested that "urban involution" (the ability of the urban informal sector to absorb large numbers of rural–urban migrants) explained the absence of revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia.[82] Returnees from urban centers, however, may also bring with them new expectations and new ideas about politics and struggle, as Noer Fauzi suggests in the case of peasant movements in West Java.[83]

Conclusions

Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham point out that "the specificity of migrant labor is not solely its geographical mobility, for all wage labor is required to be mobile at one scale or another in order to survive. There must be, in addition, some extra or special quality attached to migrants."[84] This is an important observation as it reminds us that the mere fact of labor being mobile is neither new nor remarkable, and if migration is to be seen as a significant process requiring attention then it is important to specify its empirical and conceptual implications in relation to wider economic, cultural, and political life. The articles in this collection make the case that migration does indeed need to be central to the way we now tell the story of agrarian change in Southeast Asia. Not only do they document the empirical intensification of migration processes, but they also force a multiplication of the scales at which rural change must be understood, and they show how migration forms a fundamental foundation to many aspects of economic, cultural, and political power in rural areas.

These articles reflect the breadth of possibilities in terms of a conceptual and empirical engagement with the process of migration. They constitute a range of approaches from those that place rural production at the center of discussion, to those that are more concerned with the changing identities and subjectivities of rural people (and not necessarily as labor in a production process). In the first few articles, by Hall and Latt, it is the role of migrant labor in shaping agricultural production practices that forms the core concern, with the marginalized situation of migrants creating the possibility of certain production systems. For Rigg and Salamanca, and for Barney, it is the circumstances of migrant households and villages in their places of origin that are of interest, with both articles showing how individual and household migration decisions intersect with larger political-economic (and political-ecological) processes. Lukasiewicz and Hew then draw attention to the ways in which rural production is rooted in gendered and generational identities and divisions of labor, identities that are reworked through mobility. Mills and Tubtim take a quite different tack, however, moving away from a focus on the countryside as a productive landscape

82. McGee and Armstrong 1968.
83. Fauzi 2003.
84. Gibson and Graham 1986, 133.

The home of wealthy migrants to a rural area near Chiang Mai, Thailand, overlooks rice fields, even including observation decks. (Credit: P.F. Kelly)

and thinking instead about the ways in which it is consumed—and especially how such consumption can represent both a claim for membership in national modernity (Mills) or a clash between local residents and migrant newcomers (Tubtim). Finally, Elmhirst's article tackles the political subjectivities of rural migrants in their efforts to stay "on-side" with the state, efforts that themselves lead to further migrations. Together, then, these articles reflect a breadth of possibilities—possibilities both in the experience of migration among those who move, and possibilities in terms of how we might conceptualize the meaning of these movements.

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