EDITORIAL

When people come together: The power of Identities in Southeast Asia

Focused on identities, our Work Package recognises that the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) shapes collective imaginings about the future of the region. These visions are built on the pillars that support progress in the community: economy, security, and culture.

ASEAN-led integration proceeds as an agreement among member states to facilitate the exchange of goods, services, and people and enhance the quality of the region’s competitive relations.

However, as the violent polarisations of the Cold War subsided and gave way to an increased mobility of people, goods and information, the peoples of Southeast Asia have become culturally aware of their own creative diversity and their place in Asia and the world. Bolstered by travel, education, and digital technologies, citizens are more exposed to one another and able to forge new alliances that could compete with institutional projects. Shared identities are instrumental in this regard.

The ground is fertile, as it were, for its citizens to come together.

New ways of creating partnerships and communities are possible and at the present time becoming more relevant to the region’s future. Therefore we approach the forging of regional belonging from the perspective and experiences of non-state entities.

How do we achieve this? As a region, Southeast Asia relies on networks built by its citizens based on ethnic, religious, and other affinities. Our many projects reflect this complex reality. We are investigating ethnic, religious, and generational responses across the region to many issues such as violence, trauma, and exclusion. In our view, these are matters that compel the peoples of Southeast Asia to respond in a collective fashion.

Taken together, the projects in our Work Package all interrogate to what extent non-state actors are taking part in shaping or contesting regional integration. At the same time, their initiatives demonstrate both the potential and limits of regional integration. As we explain in detail in this newsletter, our projects are divided according to the following themes: violence, generations, and transnationalism.

Why are we paying attention to voices from below? The struggle for legitimacy among non-state actors is relevant in two ways. At one level, it shows that by relying on ethnicity, religion, and generation, movements are looking for concrete ways of defining themselves. At another level, it demonstrates how such markers bring together actors around Southeast Asia. In so doing, they contribute to a re-imagining of the region’s future.

That we write this editorial at a time when Southeast Asia battles with the impact of COVID-19 makes the inquiry of our Work Package far more relevant. Borders have been closed and some of its leaders have taken advantage of the opportunity to consolidate power, heighten surveillance, and curb liberties.

If there is any lesson to be learned from the projects in our package, it is this: people have their own ways of navigating the limitations imposed upon them by the state. People do come together and identities are powerful in this regard. Shared experiences of violence and oppression are particularly forceful.

What people do collectively is as much about the present as it is the future.

Volker Grabowsky (Leader) and Jayeel Cornelio (Co-Leader), Work Package 5
Rationale of WP 5 and Individual Projects

THE BASIC PREMISE OF Work Package 5 (IDENTITY) is that the ASEAN project to create a common Southeast Asian identity is elite-driven. Regional integration is far more complex given that there are competing identities at play. The challenges confronting Southeast Asia make regional integration arguably more complex than it has been for the European Union. Southeast Asia is a religiously and ethnically fragmented region, which poses challenges to the long-term project of regional integration. The current global context places pressure on the values of multilateralism and the possibility of plural and transversal identities, thus posing a threat to ASEAN’s framework-building efforts in the socio-cultural sphere. Fragmented identities along religious, linguistic, and ethnic lines among Southeast Asians are arenas where different forces are competing for local allegiances.

This Work Package examines three themes that are crucial to understanding competing regional integrations among Southeast Asians: generations, transnationalism, and violence. Generational configurations are the focus of a study on the national, ethnic, religious and regional identities of SEA youth and the motivations of young women and men to seek a role shaping the future idea of the region. Transnational ethno-religious groups, possessing a capacity both to imagine solidarity and to exacerbate tensions, are studied for their potential to support or contest regional integration. Furthermore, for collective endeavors to nurture loyalty, collective pasts must be settled, and ways found for people to come to terms with memories of violence.

The main aim of the research cluster generations is to study how different generations construct their own identity influenced by common experiences or crucial events in the socioeconomic, political, or cultural spheres. As such experiences or events are rarely restricted to certain nation-states but affecting larger geographical entities or even operating on a global level, it is not surprising that identity formation within a specific generation is also transboundary or transnational.

The second theme is transnationalism. This cluster’s fundamental premise is that identity construction may draw on religion, gender, ethnicity, and other social markers that bring together different groups within Southeast Asia. Individual projects under the theme of transnationalism investigate to what extent ordinary citizens or their respective organizations offer alternative pathways to articulating and embodying identities in the region. This cluster has three subthemes. The first is about transnational mobility and the sense of belonging. Projects under this subtheme interrogate the relationship between citizenship and being Southeast Asian in relation to labour migration and missionary work. The second subtheme tackles transnational religious networks in borderland communities. Border areas are analytically useful in underscoring modes of transnationalism that contest boundaries set by the state. The last subtheme is the performance of ethnic and religious identities across borders. How these are defined and what entities are involved in defining them are some of the questions the various projects confront.

The final theme of WP4 is violence. Evidence from Southeast Asia suggests that a sense of belonging is shaped by the experience of mass violence. The shared memories of past violence shape ethnic, religious, social, and political identities. Bonds of loyalty are created and deepened through such memories, providing the justification and the models for future mass violence. Those who have experienced violence directly are invariably transformed by it, regardless whether they are perpetrators, victims or only witnesses of it. The individual projects of this cluster investigate the impact of large-scale violence on identity formation in societies that experienced mass killings and famine at a national level (Cambodia, Timor-Leste) as well as the impact of violence in borderlands (Myanmar/Bangladesh) and the collective memory of communal violence involving different ethnic groups and political allegiances (Vietnam).

MEDELINA HENDYTIO AND VIDHYANDIKA PERKASA (CSIS);
Generational configuration to support ASEAN integration and identity: Indonesian perspective

The main objective of this study is to understand the perceptions and expectations of the ASEAN among generations, with respect to millennials. In order to sustain ASEAN integration and maintain its relevance, there are both positive and negative contexts which need to be highlighted. Positively, ASEAN will remain significant if millennials feel there is emotional affinity with the region, may it be cultural or territorial. However, these positive elements could also bring negative impact. Cultural similarities and diversity, for example, could be supporting both ASEAN integration and identity. But at the same time they could be a source of competition and conflict. Another positive arena for ASEAN integration relates to common issues that support the necessity to ‘collaborate’ among ASEAN millennials in such areas as human trafficking, terrorism and drug smuggling.

In the meantime, ASEAN tends to become irrelevant or insignificant among millennials if a member-state country faces problems of upholding nationalism, fighting separatism or other radicalized movements and fails to protect minority rights. In general, theoretically, since identity is fluid and involves layers of identification, it is interesting to understand where millennials place or rank ASEAN identity among those multiple identifications.

There are two foci in this study. Firstly, one needs to observe how younger generations are shaping collective
imaginings about ASEAN identity. Can the younger generations help forge a harmonious identity for ASEAN? Compared to their predecessors, younger generations have different expectations of ASEAN. Secondly, it is also observed how conflict and narratives of violence and marginalization played a significant role in the construction of identity. Papua, a conflict-stricken province in the eastern part of Indonesia serves as a case study. The project also explores the trend of increasing extremism among Indonesian millennials which could jeopardize efforts to maintain domestic stability with the spirit of nationalism and respect towards diversity.

DANNY WONG TZE KEN (UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA):
Hakka dialect identity versus Chinese identity in the face of state policy in Malaysia

This project traces the Hakka’s origin in China and their migration to Malaysia. In China, they congregated mainly in the province of Guangdong in the South with smaller numbers living in northwestern region of the neighbouring province of Fujian. The Hakka who came to Malaysia are not a homogenous community. They form sub-dialect groups broadly organised in two large categories, related to the counties in Guangdong during the late nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth century. This transformation of their identity from that of the broad category of being Chinese into smaller groups identified by their dialects represents a form of macro-micro relationship.

Furthermore, the project investigates the way the Hakka dialect identity has developed since the Hakka were established as a community in Malaysia (and the rest of Southeast Asia), and how this distinctive dialect group, became part of the efforts by the Chinese community in fostering dialect identity, especially by the dialect group and the state alike. The former, jealously guarded their dialect identity, while the latter, exploited this identity as a way of identifying the Chinese community, reflecting yet another form of macro-micro relations. In so doing, the state, represented initially by the British administration, created a framework of identity by extending recognition and endorsed dialect-based Chinese organisations, cemeteries, schools, and an official population census that encapsulated the Chinese into such manner of identity. The study also traces the changes that took place through different eras, including the rise of Chinese nationalism, Japanese military occupation, post-war Emergency, and post-independent Malaysia, and how this dialect identity coped with the changes and demands of each of these eras and survived. Finally, the research also examines the state’s policy towards this dialect identity and how the dialect organisations, including those of the Hakka, responded.

NATASHA PAIRAUDEAU (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY):
Kula’s perceptions of who they were and how they have changed over time

This project is on Kula or Shan gem miners in the borderlands of Thailand and former French Indochina. The research is mainly based on primary sources kept in archives in France, England, Thailand and Cambodia. This historical research is enriched by interviews with informants in the three sites of Pailin in western Cambodia, Chanthaburi in eastern Thailand, and Huay Sai on the Lao side of the “Golden Triangle”. The project explores the historical trajectories of the Kula, bringing together an understanding of their once-vibrant involvement as gem miners in border areas between Siam and French Indochina, with their position today. Its aim is an historically informed analysis of the terms upon which migrant peoples such as the Kula formed regional senses of belonging, and how their allegiances and identities were shaped and reshaped in the long twentieth century. Through this analysis it seeks to answer how well groups such as the Kula might be aligned with one of ASEAN’s goals for 2020, that of fostering the development of a common regional identity.

There is much to be gained in understanding Kula history by turning to scholarship addressing the relationship between Southeast Asia’s lowland states and its upland peoples. The Kula miners were fleeing the disruptions of already
complex upland tributary relationships. Even though they were depicted by outsiders as a self-sufficient, unruly bunch seeking sapphires and rubies, they were actively engaged in bids to re-order their political lives, both locally at the mines and back in the Shan States.

The dynamics of gem mining are central to this story. The high value of gems, coupled with the ease with which they may be hidden, makes the output of gem mines difficult to control for any claimant to authority. In turn, while peripheries are by their nature removed from centres of power, gem mines on the periphery hold a special position. They are particularly attractive to political outcasts seeking to finance bids for power. Kula control over the mines and their earnings enabled them to propose, and to finance, bids for power in the disrupted Shan States.

OLIVER TAPPE (UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE):
Tin mining among Vietnamese laborers in Laos

This project studies the migration of Vietnamese workers into the tin mining region in the Nam Pathaen river valley in the central Lao province of Khammuan situated opposite the northeastern Thai province of Nakhon Phanom. It combines historical and anthropological research methods in a longue durée perspective on labour relations and livelihoods over several generations. While research in the French colonial archives sheds light on the emergence of industrial labour and corresponding migration dynamics, anthropological field research in the mining villages addresses the question of how local artisanal mining and large-scale mining concessions shape the everyday life of the local population. In both components of the project, Vietnamese labour mobility constitutes a key issue with regard to geopolitical aspects and regional economic integration as well as to questions of demography and local identity.

Large-scale Vietnamese migration to Laos dates to colonial times when the French administration faced the problem of labour in the growing mining and plantation industries all over Indochina. While labour demand on the rubber plantations in Cochinchina was met by importing thousands of North-Vietnamese coolies, the Lao mines faced a mix of attempts of local (seasonal) labour recruitment and a combination of state-organized and spontaneous labour migration from Vietnam.

The ongoing economic and political influence of Vietnam in past and present Laos matches with specific migration patterns. In the Lao mining sector, this influence is linked to transnational economic and political dynamics and related processes of regional integration. For a historical contextualization of cross-regional relations and interactions, precolonial trade networks and patrimonial relations across Southeast Asia must be considered as well. One goal of the project is to understand local and migrant workers’ everyday experiences, and their embeddedness in larger sociopolitical networks and dependencies.

PRASIT LEPREECHA (CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY):
Transnational indigenism in Southeast Asia

This project looks at the historical development of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) its roles and challenges in the transnational indigenist movement in ASEAN countries. The AIPP was established in 1988, by leaders of indigenous peoples in India, Bangladesh, Philippines, and Malaysia. Later on, indigenous peoples in other countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia joined this organization. Presently, AIPP has 48 members from 14 countries. The establishment of AIPP was influenced by the rights movement of indigenous peoples in North and Latin America and Australia, which emerged since the 1930s, and it was recognized by international laws and institutions. The aims of AIPP are to promote and protect indigenous peoples’ rights,
cultures and identities, and to promote indigenous-based development and self-determination.

As a regional organization, AIPP has played significant roles in cooperating with and supporting local and national indigenous organizations in different sub-regions. AIPP has also gained recognition of indigenous rights movements at an international level. Nonetheless, AIPP and the indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia can hardly compete with state governments and the business sector in the contemporary context of regional integration.

Due to Chinese influence in Southeast Asia and neo-liberalization, the rights of indigenous peoples to land, natural resources, and their own culture are more and more violated. Increasing development has marginalized and victimized indigenous peoples displaced in many countries, due to hydropower construction, mining concession, and agro-industrial plantations. Nation-state building projects also gradually destroy indigenous culture and stereotype them.

**FILOMENO AGUILAR, JR (ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY): Skilled migration, citizenship, and regional belonging in Southeast Asia**

The project investigates the circumstances, concomitants, and consequences of migrants from the Philippines acquiring Singaporean citizenship. In Singapore, the anti-immigration sentiment has led to substantial policy changes that differentiate the citizen from the noncitizen. Permanent residents have felt the citizen–noncitizen distinction very keenly because it has affected children’s access to education, which many resent because their sons are also required to render national service. Many skilled migrants are not encouraged to remain in Singapore.

In 2011 Singapore also established the Singapore Citizenship Journey as a requirement for naturalization to engender “political love” for Singapore. Many Filipinos, despite their permanent residency, have not been willing to undergo naturalization because of their unwillingness to lose their Philippine citizenship. For them nationalism holds a strong affective value. Most informants have not really thought of their “Southeast Asian” identity while living and working in Singapore. If anything, they have been more conscious about their Filipino identity. Informants who said they have become more conscious about Southeast Asia point to the international cuisine available in Singapore and the opportunities to interact with other foreigners.

The limited number of interviews suggests that transnational migration by highly skilled professionals from the Philippines does not diminish national identity, while naturalization or acquisition of citizenship in another Southeast Asian state (Singapore) is pursued mainly for pragmatic reasons. Attachment to the nation–state of origin prevents the formation of affective citizenship toward Singapore. The sense of belonging to “Southeast Asia” is tenuous. In this sense, skilled labor migration, which is a part of the ASEAN Economic Blueprint, does not lend itself easily to the goal of regional integration, except in economic terms.

**JAYEEL CORNELIO AND ERRON MEDINA (ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY): Filipino Christianity in Bangkok**

The project explores the sense of belonging of Filipino Christian missionaries based in Thailand, but also occasionally involved elsewhere in Southeast Asia. It advances the concept of the religious imaginary to account for the ways Filipino missionaries make sense of Southeast Asia, the region to which they feel they have been called.

Religious imaginaries are people’s cognitive ways of making sense of time and history. The religious imaginary frames time in a metaphysical order in which the past continues to play out in the present. Remembering and reenacting tradition makes this continuity possible. The religious imaginary, deployed through lingering beliefs and rituals, is in effect a chain of memory for people, to remain connected to the past.

In terms of history, the religious imaginary recognizes the past as foundational to the creation of a religious community.

Based on interviews with Filipinos involved in missionary work in Thailand, this study spells out the details of this religious imaginary. Firstly, the region is reimagined as a place where convenience and career are given up. Many interlocutors were once migrant workers until an interruption took place in their lives. The interruption is what makes it possible for them to grasp their new calling for an unconverted region. This point is significant because often the movement of Filipinos is to developed countries where the religious imaginary does not involve sacrificing career. Secondly, the religious encounters justify or validate the calling. These often come in the form of visions or spiritual moments about the region itself.

The project explores the ways in which Filipino Christians merge their religious identities with their citizenship to fulfill their calling in Southeast Asia. A promising lead for the project lies in the enactment of spiritual calling in the form of religious activities where the religious imaginary becomes observable. These activities include transnational religious gatherings and church anniversaries that magnify a Filipino sense of destiny for missionaries in Southeast Asia.

**KWANCHEWAN BUADAENG (CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY): Karen conversion in the Thailand and Myanmar borderland**

The project deals with a Karen religious cult called Talaku, which was established around two centuries ago and has gone through many structural changes in history. The Talaku has maintained their bounded territory and distinctive identity although with some adjustments in the rituals and practices. However, the recent socio–economic and political changes post a greater challenge to the survival of the cult. The Christian missions have started to successfully convert some members. Those who have not decided to convert have to adjust their ideology and practices. The project seeks to explore how the integrative forces of the state, non–state and religious agencies affect the existence of formerly bounded religious communities. It also includes the ways in which the cult members have reconstructed their identities, organizations and practices in response to the integrative forces.
The Thailand-Myanmar borderland has undergone rapid changes in the last decade. On the Myanmar side of the border, the fighting between ethnic armed groups and the Burmese army has basically ceased although occasional clashes still happen. Within a relatively peaceful context, economic development has accelerated. The Burmese government launched an industrial development zone, joined by Chinese enterprises under the umbrella of China’s One Belt One Road policy. The Thai government has also launched a Special Economic Zones scheme at the border, which supports the construction of mega projects.

The big question for the Talaku and for this research concerns the future. In 2019, the Talaku in Letongkhu village already has several factions: Christians, modified Talaku, and Buddhist Talaku, among others. However, they have to live together at the same place in one village because the separation into many villages is not possible according to the Thai system of village registration. The relatively traditional Talaku has separated to build a new cluster on the Myanmar side of the border. Talaku identity is thereby increasingly pluralized.

SIFUI DAO (UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG):
Buddhist pilgrimages in the Upper Mekong basin: Revival of Tai identities

This project locates itself in the borderland community of the Tai Lü, a transnational ethnic Tai group who lives in the borderlands of China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Of central importance are the transborder religious practices of the Tai Lü and their worship of the transnational Theravada Holy Monk (ton bun). These practices contest the newly formed nation-state borders by fostering a transborder ethnic-religious network. As a transborder ethnic group, the Tai Lü people, like other related Tai ethnic groups such as the Tai Khun, have not drawn much academic attention; one case in point is the Theravada Buddhism they practice. The Tai living in a marginal zone within the Upper Mekong River Basin, probably have closer connection with each other than with their respective national centres. Transnational pilgrimage and merit-making activities are parts of the religious practices of the Tai, especially of those who live in the borderlands of their respective nation-states. The dynamics of the Tai Lü transnational networks based on Buddhist pilgrimages are studied against the background of restoration projects at three prominent temple structures triggering a sense of belonging among members of the Tai Lü ethnic group coming from different states of the Upper Mekong valley.

There is a special focus on the Ban Yang Fa Project, which is an attempt to preserve the local Buddhist architectural style, involving the cooperation between Thailand and Sipsong Panna. Ban Yang Fa is a village in Mɯaŋ Cхаe township, Mɯaŋ Hаi district. Thai artists visiting the village of Ban Yang found that the villagers of Ban Yang Fa planned to tear down the hall and rebuild a new one. The Thai artists became very worried about the disappearance of traditional architecture and arts and proposed to assist the reconstruction. A reconstruction project was proposed by the Art and Culture Office of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Thirty-four artists from Thailand and artists from Sipsong Panna donated their paintings for a series of charity auction exhibitions in Thailand (Bangkok) to raise funds for the reconstruction.

JAN VAN DER PUTTEN AND ALAN DARMAWAN
(UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG):
Malayness, cultural performances, and reinvention of heritage in the Malay world

This project investigates how people defining themselves as ethnically Malay live in separate communities across national borders and reassert their Malayness through art festivals. Art festivals stimulate regeneration in art practices and invite the youngsters to engage in art production, to use traditional arts as sources of new creations and to perform them before national and international audiences. International Malay art festivals make the Malay performers familiar with the new achievements and strengthen the Malay world network. How do art festivals enhance networks in the Malay world?

Most of the provinces in Sumatra employ art festivals to celebrate identity and promote Malayness. Malaysia, Singapore and the southern provinces of Thailand also stage Malay art festivals. The festivals follow each other in quick succession and the same cultural workers are engaged to perform in one festival after another. The year 2017 witnessed several festivals taking place consecutively in Tanjung Pinang, Batam, Daik-Lingga, Pekanbaru and then,

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Medan. The participants in those events come from Sumatra, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, south Thailand and even from south Vietnam. On the other hand, from the Riau Islands young performers travel to the neighboring countries to perform at art festivals. This part of the research investigates how the cultural workers and youngsters in the Riau Islands conceive their encounter with young Malay performers from the other Malay lands at art festivals. Moreover, it uncovers also the experiences of several groups of artists from the Riau Islands performing at the festival in Malaysia and Singapore and how they perceive Malayness in the neighboring countries.

The changing context of identity formation in the Malay world reveals that there is no single dominant force encouraging people in regional and transnational networks. Rather they are revived efforts of multi-players who accentuate their roles in Malay historical narratives for a reputation of being or becoming the center of the Malay world. Within this configuration, art festivals held at one place after another, emerge as a means of connecting the Malay world, involving the youth in cultural production in order to shape Malayness and enhance consciousness of being Malay. Islamic royal relations also cement national and transnational connections in the networks that manifest themselves in cultural performances giving concrete form to this space called the Malay world.

**VOLKER GRABOWSKY (UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG): Democratic Kampuchea’s Revolutionary Terror in the 1970s: The Role of the Cambodian Youth in Mass Violence**

German sociologist and genocide specialist Gunnar Heinsohn argues that an excess of young adult males in the population (notably in cases where the cohort of those aged 15–24 years is higher than 20 percent of the total) leads to social unrest, internal and external armed conflicts, and terrorism. Heinsohn’s provocative thesis appears highly plausible in the light of the Cambodian experience. Cambodia’s “youth bulge” increased from 17.1 percent in 1962 to 19.7 percent in 1970, with many thousands of high-school students unable to find employment in the state bureaucracy of Prince Sihanouk’s autocratic regime and thus receptive for radical political mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The “extreme youth” was certainly one of the major demographic characteristics of Cambodia at the beginning of the Cambodian tragedy.

This is the point of departure of the project on the role of the Cambodian youth in the violent revolution of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. Though traditional forms of education were eradicated by closing schools and universities, ransacking libraries, burning “reactionary” books, and killing teachers of the old regime, the widespread notion that any kind of education ceased to exist in Democratic Kampuchea’s “stone-age communism” is wrong. While the old “feudalist-bourgeois” educational institutions were dismantled, the Cambodian communists introduced a qualitatively different system of education which put the main emphasis on communal and more participatory forms of learning that took place outside the classrooms and emphasized the crucial importance of manual labour to transform human nature along with a transformation of the physical landscape. This kind of education was directed at the children of the poor and lower middle peasants rather than the children of the “new people” who would have considered Angkar’s educational approach as an almost total lack of teaching. It seems evident that the rationale behind Democratic Kampuchea’s new education system was to create a sense of belonging to a peasant-worker collectivity, any kind of individualistic behaviour and thinking being eradicated. Violence played a crucial role to forge this collective identity among the peasant youth.

**JANINA PAWELZ (GIGA, HAMBURG): Youth, violence, and identities of insecurity in Timor Leste**

Commonly, youth violence in Timor-Leste is linked to rivaling martial arts groups. Violent clashes between rival martial arts groups became frequent in the independence era, including numerous injuries and deaths. Yet, the overall level of violence is situated within a medium range as most incidents are non-lethal. The general security situation is under control and communities enjoy peace and stability. While the majority of martial arts groups in Timor-Leste is peaceful, three martial arts groups have frequently been associated with violence and have been barred as illegal by the government in 2013. Martial arts identity is strong, fostered by a lifelong commitment. While several identities can co-exist, there are three types of clashes of identities related to martial arts groups. First, a clash between martial arts’ identity and national identity; secondly, between martial arts’ identity and security forces; and third, between martial arts’ identities and political identities. Most importantly, the hierarchical structure of command, the loyalty to the group and the obedience to their leaders makes it easy to influence the voting behaviour. This structure can easily be used for generating political support, as the elections in 2018 evidenced.

The analysis of the case of Timor-Leste shows that there are various identities on several levels. ASEAN identity may indeed remain an elite idea supported by politicians. In regard
to youth identities, martial arts groups play a major role as a vehicle for youth identity and belonging. Martial arts groups exhibit strong ties of loyalty, concepts of brotherhood and unity, and mutual assistance. The sport practiced by martial arts groups offers a potential to engage in athletic competitions on a national and even international level. Besides being an outlet for youth recreational activity and outlet for energy, participation in international competitions can contribute to consolidate identities both as Timorese and as a Southeast Asian country.

JACQUES LEIDER (EFEO): Ethno-religious entanglements and violence in the Bengal-Burma borderlands

The relationship between violence and the sense of forming a persecuted community of destiny, rather than ethno-political ideologies, is examined using a group nowadays called “Rohingya” and their entanglement in the Bengal-Burma borderlands during the period 1942-1952 as a case in point. British administrative, military and diplomatic papers and correspondence form an important body of sources. This is consistent with the fact that the border region belonged to the British Empire until the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and Burma in 1948. British reports are found in the National Archives of the UK and the India Office Collections of the British Library in London. Myanmar administrative and diplomatic sources are accessible in the department of the National Archives in Yangon.

Colonial census reports are an important source of historical enquiries, because they provide statistical evidence on the development and the composition of the population. Nonetheless, their use raises both critical questions and methodological challenges; it also involves, quasi inevitably, the contemporary, ideologically tainted, debate on Rohingya identity. Two issues have gained prominence: the name issue (neither the census reports nor other British administrative documents use the term “Rohingyas” for North Arakan Muslims) and the historical relevance of Chittagonian settlers (the census reports strongly support the evidence of the arrival of new Muslim settlers from the neighboring region of Chittagong). Therefore, modern Rohingyas tend to reject the validity of colonial census reports arguing that the Rohingya identity really has a precolonial foundation and that migrations of Chittagonians were mostly seasonal labor movements.

The study of the emergence of ethno-nationalist identities among Buddhists and Muslims in the border context at the end of WWII and the early years after independence shows the parallel development of rival communal identities, competing territorial ambitions nurtured by elites, defensive strategies with regard to central state administrations and a mix of aggressive and defensive tactics to gain political advantages in the parliamentary arena. How did the emergence of novel and newly energized local identities connect to violence?

ANDREW HARDY AND DAO THE DUC (EFEO): Mass violence and regime change in the Vietnamese highlands

This project examines an event of mass violence that took place in January 1950 at Són Hà in Quang Ngã province; it has three aims: to shed light on the local historical context that led to the violence, to establish the facts of the event itself, and to explore the impact of the collective memory of the event on twenty-first-century ethnic relations and political culture in Quang Ngã province.

The results of ethnographic research into the events of 25 January 1950 demonstrate the high level of organisation and discipline among the Hrê that day. Coercion alone was insufficient for the mobilisation of this army, even among the Hrê, whose village heads held immense power. Interviews showed that some Hrê saved those they knew personally but were prepared to kill Viet they were not acquainted with. It was possible for people to avoid participating in the killing. These data suggest that those who did participate were not only motivated by a fear of punishment.

This project raises the following theoretical question: is there a relation between regime change and mass violence? To answer this question, we consider three types of resource that created the conditions for mass violence. The first is military: the availability of weapons and fighters trained in their use. The second is political: the availability of an authority with the political capacity to mobilise military resources. The third is ideological and is strictly speaking a dimension of the second: this is the availability of a discourse that dehumanises or ‘others’ a community, offering political justification to the act of killing.
Jayeel Cornelio (Co-Leader, Work Package 5) interviewed Nel Jason Haw, a public health expert in the Philippines. Haw, who is jointly appointed in the Health Sciences Program and the Development Studies Program at the Ateneo de Manila University, is also a consultant for the Philippine Department of Health. He shares with us a bird’s eye view of how the country has been responding to COVID-19 and the challenges it continues to face.

JC: Hi, Jason! Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Please describe to us what you do with respect to public health in the Philippines.

JH: Based at the Ateneo de Manila University, I am an expert in public health and epidemiology. I am also a consultant for the Department of Health of the Republic of the Philippines. I draw on my extensive experience in public health policy, research, and practice, with particular attention to health financing, the health of vulnerable populations, and global health. I have served as a consultant for government and international organizations, and a senior manager for a health technology company.

JC: In brief, where is the Philippines now in terms of handling COVID-19?

JH: Just like many countries, the Philippines is seeing a continuing steady rise in cases. Our latest statistics show that there are more than 35,000 confirmed cases, with daily reported increases fluctuating between 500 and 1,000. Most of the hotspots remain to be urban and suburban areas, which is expected given population densities of megacities in the Philippines such as Metropolitan Manila. Social distancing may be difficult to enforce even when community-level quarantines are imposed.

The government continues to implement a strategy of expanding laboratory capacity and health facility capacity to detect, isolate, and treat cases. There are now 68 laboratories nationwide, from just one in March and we have tested more than 600,000 individuals. There are more than 13,000 dedicated hospital beds for COVID-19, and more than 60,000 in temporary treatment facilities for suspected cases. A lot of work still needs to be done to make sure health system capacity is sufficient because at the end of the day, we have to situate newly confirmed cases with how well the health system is going to cope with these increases. Given that the country is still at different levels of community-level quarantine, the government continues to work in expanding health system capacity to prepare for the eventual lifting of these quarantines.

JC: And how does the country fare in comparison to its neighbors in Southeast Asia?

JH: Based on data from the Johns Hopkins University, the Philippines ranks third in Southeast Asia in terms of total confirmed cases, behind Indonesia and Singapore. Media outlets and experts have touted the success of Thailand and Vietnam, and this is because their health systems are much better equipped than the Philippines prior to the start of this outbreak. They were able to respond much faster in terms of contact tracing and scaling up resources than the rest of Southeast Asia. In a rapidly evolving situation like a pandemic of an emerging infectious disease, time is of the essence and it spells the difference between the success of a country (effectively limiting community transmission) and the failure of another country (playing catch-up for months to come).

JC: Many commentators believe that state response in the Philippines has been largely militarized. Can you explain why this is the case?

JH: This behavior is expected from the current administration since taking office in 2016. A number of key cabinet-level positions across various social sectors are held by former military officials, and these cabinet officials form the president’s most trusted circle, so it is not surprising that these same officials have been tapped into responding to this public health crisis.
JC: In your view, is the government using COVID-19 as a pretext to curb the democratic rights and freedom of speech of Filipinos and silence the political opposition? This can be observed in other Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia.

JH: I don’t know much about Cambodia’s political situation, so I can’t compare the Philippine experience to theirs. The current government’s human rights violations are well documented in many reputable sources so I direct your readers’ attention there.

In the context of COVID-19, we do hear of reports in many local governments where police have used excessive force in implementing stay-at-home orders. Unlawful arrests have also been made of peaceful protesters exercising social distancing. These reports are not surprising given the police’s track record with the communities that they are supposed to protect and serve. The use of police in responding to an outbreak is not inherently wrong; in fact, a lot of countries have used police and military personnel to assist in civilian duties such as contact tracing, and even clinical care for military health personnel. What is key here is the police’s track record in serving their communities, and the Philippines has had a terrible record with this even before the Duterte administration. So I would say that the use of police in responding to the outbreak in the Philippines has not been helpful at all from any perspective.

JC: What is the position of the political opposition and civil society organizations towards COVID-19?

The government has been largely criticized for not providing enough economic relief since community-level quarantine began in March. The statistics support this as 17.7% of the labor force are now unemployed. The state has offered some support by means of cash grants distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and supplemented by local governments for most poor and near-poor Filipinos. Cash grants for overseas workers sent home by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration have also been administered. Cash grants too have been given to workers (covered by social security) whose work hours have been reduced and those who work in micro, small, and medium enterprises.

Another criticism revolves around missed opportunities in responding to the outbreak early. As I mentioned, time is of the essence, and every day missed has exponential implications in terms of increasing cases. Laboratory capacity could have been expanded earlier to allow for more aggressive detection of cases in February and March. Incoming travels could have been screed and quarantined more keenly upon arrival to prevent the risk of importation. I hope we take these as key lessons to prepare for the next outbreak.

PAST EVENTS

• Research Workshop 3, Chiang Mai, 6–7 February 2020.

FUTURE EVENTS

• Dissemination Workshop 5. “WP5: The Region”, Jakarta (date to be confirmed)
• WP 1 Policy Briefing Sessions, Brussels (date to be confirmed)
• WP 5 Policy Briefing Sessions, Brussels (date to be confirmed)
THE DOCUMENTARY FILM “Flow of Sand” is set, both against the backdrop of increasing Chinese investment in real estate in Malaysia in recent years and, also, the political transition following the May 2018 legislative elections. Futuristic, large-scale land reclamation projects are some of the visible expressions of these investments. Two case studies are explored in the film: ‘Forest City’ in Johor and ‘Melaka Gateway’ in Malacca, both of which have been launched in attractive places by the sea in these two Malaysian states. Moreover, both projects are part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and they are built on artificial islands reclaimed from the sea. Yet having been initially hailed for boosting the economy and creating jobs these projects have also subsequently attracted criticism for exacerbating social injustices and for impacting negatively on the environment.

“Flow of Sand” thus seeks to reveal the contested nature of these projects showing both these projects’ ambitions and their contradictions. While they aspire to create a pleasant, prosperous and eco-friendly environment in strategic locations, yet this is at the cost of social alienation, and negative impacts on the ecosystem. By including the perspective of affected community members, particularly in Malacca, this film raises questions about the projects’ deleterious effects such as exacerbating social inequality and the destruction of the environment. In the film images of silt, artificial beaches and dunes are used as visual signifiers, connecting the different “flows” of sand with these social and environmental issues.
IN THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL election on 2019, Joko Widodo won by a landslide in Papua. When it comes to his victory, there are two key contributing factors: his characteristics and his work results. His down-to-earth ‘character’ and his signature ‘blusukan’ visits, successfully earned the hearts of the people. His success in building the long-overdue infrastructure in Papua, such as roads, markets, and other public facilities, specifically the construction of the biggest stadium in East Indonesia—Stadion Papua Bangkit—also became a major contributing factor.

Aside from his showcased achievements, there are still plenty of unfinished works to be done for the remaining of his term, namely the poor handling of human rights violation cases and further attempts to provide social welfare for native Papuans. Interestingly, a study from CSIS Indonesia shows that among younger native Papuans, the arrival of ‘newcomers’ created more issues and may further marginalize the natives. This issue quickly became as prominent as the aforementioned issues in Papua.

THE IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

According to Papuans, the idea of migration is viewed as a ‘systematic’ method to ‘erase’ and cause them to go ‘extinct’. Based on CSIS Indonesia’s study, Jokowi’s efforts to develop the infrastructure are not always perceived positively. This begs the question of whether the infrastructure was built to benefit newcomers or the native Papuans. This may sound trivial, but this issue may trigger a deadly conflict if not addressed promptly. Wamena conflict in 2003 may serve as a reminder of an ethnic polarization between native Papuans and newcomers that may lead to grave consequences.

To put it simply, migration in the context of Papua possesses various dimensions: economics, politics, and socio-cultural. Through the economics perspective, the extraction of natural resources and the availability of jobs seem to only favour the newcomers. This is due to the massive gap of competence between native Papuans and newcomers. Native Papuans—with their limited capabilities—are generally less competitive in
the job markets when compared to newcomers, as a result, native Papuans begin to feel inferior.

POLITICAL ASPECT AND PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

In the last legislative election, there were complaints regarding the lack of native Papuans representations and how the majority of the legislative members were newcomers. Meanwhile, in terms of the socio-cultural landscape, the extinction of traditions, cultures, and religions causes another major concern. In general, the impacts of migration have shifted, dislocated, and marginalized the native Papuans in their own lands.

They believe that their cultural survival is at risk with the increasing number of newcomers. This heavily influenced the continuous strength of ‘nationalism’ within the native Papuans (McGibbon, 2004) in which the dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is more apparent and significant with the presence of different physical traits.

ETHNIC DIVERSITIES

Pondering on the potential conflict due to the massive migration, a study regarding ethnicity in Papua is urgently needed. It is undeniable that the historical factor in the colonial era, transmigration policy in New Order, developments, and progressive investments have played their own parts in triggering the presence of ethnic diversities in Papua. An attempt by Ananta, et al (2016) to capture this situation used 2010 census data to portray the ethnic fractionalization and ethnic polarization in Papua.

Ethnic fractionalization indicates ethnic heterogeneity, whilst ethnic polarization indicates the presence of other ethnic groups with similar sizes, such as between Javanese ethnicity and Dani tribes. According to Ananta, the absence of proper approach, both fractionalization and polarization may trigger antagonism and ethnic-based conflict—whether it is between newcomers and natives or among the natives, for instance, a conflict may occur between the coastal tribes and the mountain tribes.

An identical observation was conducted by Elmslie (2017) who portrays the demographic transition. This study later revealed that the percentage of native Papuans in Papua and West Papua tend to decrease due to migration. Major cities in Papua are mostly inhabited by newcomers, the numbers are Merauke 62.73 percent, Nabire 52.46 percent, Mimika 57.49 percent, Keerom 58.68 percent, and Jayapura 65 percent. In accordance with Ananta, et al, the major ethnic contribution comes from Java.

Newcomers mainly reside in the coastal areas while native Papuans remain as the majority in the mountainous area. Newcomers are considered to take more benefits from the facilities available from the major cities—especially in education and health—compared to the native Papuans.

Broadly speaking, migration has its own unavoidable impacts. The assumption that migration is a “systematic” method to erase native Papuans is a harmful misconception. In order for native Papuans to thrive and compete with the newcomers, they need special treatment and attention, in the name of fairness.

It is a matter of fact that there are mentality and character problems here that nurture a stigma and impede the cross-ethnic interaction processes in Papua. The main contributing factor is the lack of scientific research to further understand Papuan culture, resulting in the cultivation of ethnic prejudice (Mansoben, 1995)

Newcomers deemed as capable, diligent, and accountable when working, in contrast to the natives who are seen as irresponsible and lax. This leads to a reluctance of newcomers, especially the business owners, to hire natives.

The author’s observation in Jayapura also shows clear segregation between natives and newcomers. The so-called affirmative actions put to enhance native Papuans standing have not bore significant fruits.

SOLUTIONS

There are four urgent solutions that need an immediate response. First, based on the discussion between “Kelompok Kerja Papua” (Papua Working Group) and CSIS Indonesia, there needs to be a more accurate census in Papua, specifically with a focus on ethnicity. This can help in creating programs and policies aimed properly to address these issues.

2010 Census data is deemed inaccurate, due to the demographic and security issues leading to a high number of people who are yet to be censused. The absence of accurate data can be misused by reigning political elites in Papua for electoral purposes or economic advantages that are prone to abuse and corruption.

Second, judging by the complexity of the issue in this province, natives should be treated specially. There needs to be a standard for competence and capacity of native Papuans that is separate from other regions. Thus, native Papuans can acquire equal opportunity to be in the same workplace that supports cross-ethnic interaction despite different capacities.

Third, capacity building training to enhance native Papuans self-confidence must be done continuously and in a systematic manner. This must be done to help change the mentality and way of thinking that is no longer conducive and relevant in the modern era. Changing mentality requires a significant amount of time.

Fourth, the study from CSIS Indonesia identified an alienated feeling among native Papuans, as if they are not part of Indonesia because of their physical trait differences and the lack of introduction to other societies outside Papua. To address this, a policy to provide a fair opportunity for native Papuans to work outside Papua in all types of sectors.

Vidhyandika Perkasa
Head of the Department of Politics and Social Change,
CSIS Indonesia
ON 5–7 FEBRUARY 2020, the third research workshop of CRISEA was conducted in Chiang Mai, Thailand. First day’s agenda was steering committee meeting, which happened at the EFEO Centre. The meeting invited representatives from consortium members, as well as Christophe Marquet, the director of EFEO. The meeting strategized and consolidated the Consortium’s approach for CRISEA’s final year, discussing publication guidelines for researchers and on the state, identity, and the region, respectfully. The WP leaders’ session addressed the transversal themes (migration, gender, and security), and the complex tension between the macro and micro approach in individual research projects. A paper presentation by Oliver Tappe (University of Hamburg) demonstrated how macro and micro approaches can fit together on an individual case study. The afternoon session saw the web-documentaries concept of each WP being presented to the consortium, moderated by Silvia Vignato (Università di Milano–Bicocca). The web-documentaries is a means to foster cross-cultural and cross-generational communication of the research findings, in a hope to garner more viewership and readership of CRISEA’s deliverables, for an enhanced impact. Four web-documentaries are in preparation for the upcoming events and conferences, among other topics.

The second day took place at Chiang Mai University. The first session convened leaders from every WP in a macro-micro presentation, chaired by Jacques Leider (EFEO, CRISEA Scientific Coordinator). WP1 is focusing on the environment aspect of South-East Asia. WP2 discusses the economic dimension. WP3, WP4, and WP5 are each concentrating on development, while Monika Arnez’s “Flow of Sand” from WP1 (The Environment) is already available at CRISEA’s website. The film investigated the environmental and socio-economic consequences of the increasing Chinese investment in real estate in Malaysia.

On 7 February, the final day of CRISEA 3rd research workshop, each work package team were meeting in parallel. These separate meetings are aimed to harmonise the individual research projects within each work package. Each researcher presented reports from their fieldwork and final research findings, followed by open discussions on overlapping research topics and cross-WP publication coordination. The research workshop concluded with a closing plenary session at EFEO Centre’s library.
CRISEA WP4 Dissemination Conferences in Mandalay and Yangon

Contested interests, institutions and identities Formations

THE DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH projects of CRISEA Work Package 4 “The State” took place in February 2020 at two locations in Myanmar, the University of Mandalay and the French Cultural Institute in Yangon. Both events followed similar dissemination conferences and briefings in Manila, Kuala Lumpur and Chiang Mai. The dissemination conference on 9 February was convened by the Department of International Relations, the University of Mandalay’s CRISEA partner. Presenters at the morning session provided insights into public policy challenges in Myanmar and the region with papers on China’s state-state ties and business relations in Southeast Asia by Edmund Terrence Gomez from the University of Malaya, highlighting both the visibility and invisibility of these relations, an overview of obstacles and achievements by Myanmar’s National Human Rights Commission comparing them with other ASEAN countries by Marco Bünte (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany), as well as the party-building processes among ethnic parties in Myanmar’s Kachin and Shan states (Kristian Stokke, Oslo University). The afternoon session focused on dynamics of political change in Myanmar with critical contributions from Soe Myint Aung (Oslo University) on the character of the country’s democratic opening, Kyawt Kyawt Khine on Myanmar’s relations with ASEAN and ASEAN’s illiberal norms and practices reviewed by David Camroux. The last session threw light on various forms of “purification” as a political practice in Southeast Asia. While Rachel Leow’s research offered novel insights into the deportation of unwanted Chinese from SEA to China in the first half of the 20th century, Tomas Larsson (both Cambridge University) illustrated practices of religious purification as part of a process of legitimation of the new monarch ruling in Thailand. Volker Grabowsky (University of Hamburg) concluded with a discussion of mass violence in relation to the state as it emerged from the trial of Khmer Rouge leaders. The presentations drew much interest from professors and students as well as social and political actors from the Mandalay Region.

On 10 February, the French Cultural Institute in Yangon (Institut français de Birmanie) hosted a half-day briefing session by CRISEA researchers sharing their findings on Myanmar’s democratic transition, the country’s Human Rights’ Commission, its place within ASEAN since 1997 and the prospects of party-building processes of ethnic parties in the perspective of the 2020 elections. The numerous audience of journalists, academics, activists, international diplomats and members of NGOs actively engaged in the Q and A session which followed the presentations voicing matters of concern in the context of Myanmar’s current crisis issues and future challenges.
Selected Publications of CRSEA Researchers

ARNEZ, MONIKA

BOLOTTA, GIUSEPPE

BOUTÉ, VANINA

BÜNTE, MARCO
- Bünte, Marco. 2020. “Democratic Backsliding And Authoritarian Resilience In Southeast Asia: The Role Of Social Media”. In From Grassroots Activism To Disinformation. Social Media In Southeast Asia, 195–214. Singapore: ISEAS.

UFEN, ANDREAS

KUNNAMAS, NATTHANAN

DEVADASON, EVELYN S
POTAPOHN, MANOJ


GOMEZ, EDMUND TERENCE


HANSEN, ARVE


KAMIŃSKI, TOMASZ


LEIDER, JACQUES P


MIDDLETON, CARL


PIETRASIAK, MAŁGORZATA


PHOLSENA, VATTHANA


SORIENTE, ANTONIA

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<td>École française d’Extrême–Orient</td>
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<td>Jacques Leider, David Camroux, Andrew Hardy, Sophie Boisseau du Rocher, Vanina Bouté, Olivier Evrard, Rémyn Madinier, Vatthana Pholsena, Jérôme Tadié, David Camroux (Sciences Po), Andrew Hardy, Special Advisor, Sophie Boisseau du Rocher, Leader of WP5 (IFRI), Vanina Bouté (CNRS–CASE), Olivier Evrard (IRD), Rémyn Madinier (CNRS–CASE), Vatthana Pholsena (CNRS–CASE), Jérôme Tadié (IRD)</td>
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<td>• Tomas Larsson, Leader of WP3</td>
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