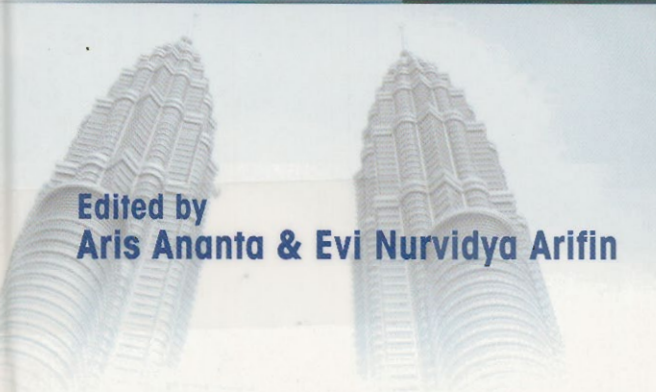


International Migration in Southeast Asia



Edited by
Aris Ananta & Evi Nurvidya Arifin

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Should Southeast Asian Borders be Opened?

Aris Ananta and Evi Nurvidya Arifin

The international networks of wealth, technology, and power have resulted in globalization and informationalization, and in turn have rapidly transformed all societies in the world. Productive capacity has increased, cultural creativity has expanded, and communication potential has multiplied. However, these same forces have also disfranchised the societies. The sudden transformations have led to the crumbling of existing mechanisms of social control and political representation (Castells 1997).

Castells argues that globalization and informationalization have brought increasing economic integration and governments have lost some controls within their own borders. International economic integration and political sovereignty have been in conflict. In the area of international labour mobility, as part of the globalization and informationalization, policies on labour market in one country may be of concern for other countries. A policy can stimulate the flow of migration to other countries and dampen wages in the receiving countries. Political problems arise because the gain from migration is not equally shared by all groups of people in a country. There are losers and winners.

Carl Gundry-Warr, in Chapter 8, posits that global migration has changed the way people think about their political, cultural, and economic maps. Moving has been much easier today and the states have become "borderless". Yet, many of them have been trapped between or within borders simply because they have crossed the borders.

It is not surprising then, that there are two opposing views on the relationship between international labour mobility and economic development. As mentioned by Tapinos (1994), the first one sees immigrants as a positive contribution to the economic development of the receiving countries. With this view, international labour mobility should be enhanced, and permitted to follow the nature of the labour market. The second view considers the non-economic, negative, implications of immigrants. This view, therefore, suggests that liberalization of trade, capital flow, relocation of activities, and co-operation should be enhanced rather than encourage in-migration.

Brettel (2000) argues that international migrants can be part of transnationalism, defined as "a social process whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political, and cultural borders". This construct is very appropriate where modes of transportation and communication in general have shortened the social distances between sending and receiving countries. The migrants can easily maintain their contact with others in their home countries. Home and host countries become "one", integrated. They are not uprooted, but they move back and forth freely between different cultures, social, economics, and political system. Migrants not only send economic remittances, but also social, cultural, and, perhaps political remittances.

Fundamental tensions have been found in all efforts to manage international population mobility in this globalizing world. On the one hand, business is transnational and international business necessitates the unrestricted flow of people internationally. On the other hand, politics is still national. The existence of supranational institutions and international organizations cannot supersede the importance of politics, which prioritizes the security and protection of the citizens in a country and hence demands restriction on the international flow of people. This dilemma becomes evident, as we have witnessed wars, internal conflicts, prosecution of minorities, and global terrorism (Jordan and Duvell 2002).

Migration has also been part of the globalization which has shaped the inter-dependence among nations, including those within Southeast