Living With Floods In A Mobile Southeast Asia: *A Political Ecology of Vulnerability, Migration and Environmental Change*

Introduction

- **Flooding is a common experience** in monsoonal regions of South East Asia
- Southeast Asia is also **a very mobile region**: many households pursue domestic and trans-national migration strategies
- Whilst regular seasonal floods are often beneficial in rural areas, where livelihood strategies adapt to 'living with floods', in urban-centric public discourse floods are often framed as being catastrophic, in need of control, and linked to arrival of unwanted migrants

Research goal

- To conceptualize the link between flooding disaster and migration in ASEAN – **as a socio-natural phenomenon**
- To **complicate simplistic analysis** that states flooding causes migration
- To **sensitize flood disaster policy** to the complexity of migration/ mobility
- Key concepts: vulnerability; resilience; diverse forms of migration/ floods; **A political ecology of mobility**

Methodology

- **Defining the flood regime**, and it's 'nature',
- **Historical contextualization** of the social setting
- Contemporary analysis of **power and access** to resources and entitlements
- **Assessing vulnerability** created/reduced by migration
- 'Vulnerability Assessment Tool' quantitative analysis

Urban case studies
- Indonesia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Vietnam

Rural case studies
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Thailand

Findings

- **People's 'vulnerability'** to flooding in Southeast Asia reflects **a larger story of socio-economic and political inequality**; destructive floods disproportionately affect those from lower socio-economic groups who lack of access to secure forms of livelihood, and have a weak voice in political processes.
- **In urban case studies, migrants are often blamed for living in risky places**, rather than recognizing the wider socio-political circumstances that locate them there. They are often subject to policies that regulate their movement, including forced resettlement, and that reinforces vulnerability
- **The effects of floods are mitigated or exacerbated by institutionalized response strategies** (or the lack thereof), as well as shaped by long-term development planning policies that include the construction of infrastructure intended to manage floods but that also redistribute risks from one (often privileged) group to others (often disadvantaged or precarious).
- **People living with floods express their agency through vulnerability reduction strategies** that include migration to: spread risk across multiple locations; and by being able to move away temporarily when disaster strikes

Project partners:

- Asian Research Center for Migration, Master of Arts in International Development Studies Program (MAIDS), Institute of Asian Studies (IAS), and Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI), Chulalongkorn University
- School of Environment and Technology, University of Brighton
- Stockholm Environment Institute (Asia)
- Southeast Asia Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (SEADPRI-UKM)
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- Asian Institute of Technology
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