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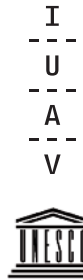
POSITIONING THE URBAN IN ASIA'S INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FLOWS

Michael Leaf

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POSITIONING THE URBAN IN ASIA'S INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FLOWS

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Introduction: international migration and urban Asia

In a major review and synthesis of theoretical and empirical studies of human population movement throughout the world undertaken in the 1990s, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Committee on South-North Migration, delineated what they called the "Asia Pacific system," as differentiated from the other prevailing global systems by the speed at which it has formed and grown over recent decades: "(p)erhaps the most salient feature of the system is its newness" (Massey et al. 1998, p. 160). Although our focus here is ultimately on the current situations faced by international migrants in Asian cities, it is important first to understand that this seemingly sudden burst in population mobility is only one aspect of the rapid changes that have characterized the region since the 1970s. Migration cannot be seen as separable from broader trends in socio-economic change and development. Such links may be discerned in broad strokes by the example of South Korea, which underwent a shift from being a place of emigration (a sending country) to being a place of immigration (a receiving country) in less than one generation, following upon its rapid industrialization (Lim 2010). And a look at examples such as Malaysia or Thailand, both of which are now simultaneously sending and receiving countries, shows that such sudden and consequential shifts continue to characterize the region.

As some would argue, it is in fact the unevenness of development as manifested on the ground that prompts population movement between locales, whether between countryside and city within a national territory or between nation-states with differing levels of labour supply and demand. Stated this way, one sees a somewhat narrow, economistic explanation of the forces that drive population movement. The world, however, is more complex than this. Human beings are much more than factors of production, the various structures which shape their movement are complex and often contradictory, and the agency which migrants exhibit in the face of such structures may defy simplistic categorization, thus posing immense challenges for social scientists, policy makers and others concerned with questions of migration.

The purposes of this paper are to briefly review international population movements within the region of East and Southeast Asia, to discuss current factors and conditions which shape policy toward international migrants,

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1. See Sassen, 2006, or Smith, 2000, for examples of how transnationalism is manifested through the increasing interconnectivity of urban systems, and the essays collected in Yeoh and Willis, 2004, for the various implications that transnationalism has for the ongoing development of nationalism in the Asia-Pacific Region.

2. As an example of the urban turn in migration studies, one could point to the multi-national, multi-site Metropolis project, which may be accessed through its Vancouver website at:
http://riim.metropolis.net/

and to seek to understand the roles and functions of urbanization in shaping flows and patterns of migration. The core section of the paper focuses on the situation of Indonesian migrants in Malaysia as a means for providing a finer grained analysis of these issues. Of the many dimensions of societal change that may be said to have restructured Asian nations over the recent period, it can be argued that urbanization has been the most consequential. Much is encapsulated in the speed and scale of urban growth. The expansion of cities may be understood in terms of basic processes of economic change as economies shift away from agricultural production toward manufacturing and services, in terms of highly consequential environmental changes requiring new forms of infrastructure and new modes of transaction, and in terms of cultural ferment and political change, as increasingly larger components of national populations are brought together in new forms of interaction within the expanding urban milieu.

The city is also a fundamental nexus in human population movement, both historically and currently. With respect to our present phase of globalization, an important stream of analysis has been advanced that emphasizes how the presence of international migrants can inform the interconnectivities between locales in a growing global system and how the persistence and even strengthening of such links shifts our understanding of such population groups from being "international" to being "transnational," that is, as having a foot (or at least an ongoing interest) in more than one national setting[1]. In this way, we see how the migrant presence in today's cities can add further, more intricate dimensions to the continuing transborder expansion of globalizing capitalism. It is not mere coincidence nor historical happenstance that the current "age of migration" (Castles and Miller, 2009) is also the "urban age" and that this is happening under the aegis of economic globalization. There has also been a tendency in the growing literature on international migration to shift the focus of attention downward from the nation-state to the city as a critical site for study, as increasingly (and unsurprisingly) it is cities, rather than countries per se, that are the primary destinations for migrants, and it is cities that now must engage in policy-setting and programmatic development to address immigrant issues[2]. Considering the rise of "the urban" in migration studies elsewhere in the world, it is noteworthy that most of the migration research within the Asian region is still highly focused on the nation-state, both in terms of empirical study and with regard to policies and practices regarding migrants. This limited attention given to the city in international migration flows is perhaps even more odd when one considers how the question of urbanization has loomed large in developmental discourses within the region for many years.

One part of the challenge of positioning the urban within the international migration flows within the region requires us to seriously examine the long-standing bifurcation within the field of migration studies between internal and international migration. It has been observed that the somewhat

artificial conceptual boundary between these two areas of research is reinforced in practice through prevailing legal and institutional structures, concerning, for example, notions of citizenship and entitlements, as well as through distinct differences in data sources and quality (Skeldon 1997; 2006), whether or not such distinctions are understood as central for the migrants themselves. Thus, any attempt to holistically consider the position of cities in regional migration flows and settlement forces us to think about the potential interactions between internal and international flows, and by extension, internal and international forces and structures which shape the migration decisions of people within the region.

A focus on the position of the city also has a normative dimension, and indeed, this paper follows upon a series of studies that pose the question of the degree to which local (that is, municipal or sub-municipal) policies and actions may be seen to foster or hinder the inclusion of foreign immigrants into local societies (Balbo 2005). The normative purpose of this inquiry, then, is to advocate for the "right to the city" as a basic human right, irrespective of the specific entitlements of formal citizenship per se (Balbo 2009). Such a concern prompts a number of follow-on questions, including whether or not municipal governments have the requisite degree of autonomy for policy making in this regard, and whether components of civil society or other non-state interests have the ability to shape local agendas regarding the position of foreign migrants within local society. Clearly then, the potential for socially progressive responses to the growth of foreign migrant populations in cities will be highly coloured by culturally informed notions of governance and by specific, local histories of cultural interaction. Population movements, whether internal or international, are noted for their complexity, and indeed, it is a challenge to briefly summarize the range of conditions one finds in the various countries and cities of Asia. In the following section, I use the idea of migration systems, at various levels of scale, as one means to summarize the various flows. Within the migration studies literature, the systems approach is a fairly recent development that deviates in certain respects from traditions of analysis focused more narrowly on one or another sending or receiving locale or on particular sets of migrants. For the interests of this paper, however, it should be pointed out that a systems approach to understanding migration should be coupled with the close examination of the conditions of immigrants' lives in their new locales in order to have as sense of the local impacts of policy and the potential for progressive change. Considering the scale of the region, one might expect such micro-level concerns to be beyond the scope of this paper, which they are. Nonetheless, the point should also be made there is a surprising dearth of such studies, and certainly nothing that approaches this issue in a systematic or comparative fashion.

Despite these caveats regarding the shortcomings of generalization, when we turn our attention to issues of policy, specifically with regard to migrant settlement, one broad generalization does hold across the region. That is,

that with the exception of a few cases regarding highly skilled international migrants (as, for example, with Singapore's policies toward "foreign talent" as distinguished from "foreign workers" – see van Grunsven, 2010), formal regimes of migration control are geared toward maintaining the status of international migrants as temporary. Indeed, this underpins the central conundrum of this paper: current systems of migration within Asia, despite their relative newness, have come to be seen as structural phenomena, and thus long-lasting if not permanent, yet the migrants themselves are understood by official policy to be temporary. Looking more closely, one finds numerous examples of dissembling and accommodation, which when considered in total expose what one prominent researcher has labeled as "the myth of temporariness" (Castles 2000, p 110). Looking forward from this, it is thus quite apparent that progressive change in policies and practices regarding the social and spatial inclusion of foreign migrants is dependent upon the development of new forms of political discourse and new understandings of urban society in the cities of Asia. In the case of Malaysia, as examined below, we see how problematic the politics of migration can be, shaped as they are by both the vicissitudes of economic development and highly fraught notions of identity. Before turning to this, however, it is useful to understand the broader canvas of migration in the region, both historically and in the present time.

History and porosity

Massey's emphasis on the "newness" of transborder migration in Asia may come as somewhat of a surprise if one considers the historic characterization of the region as one beset with "porous borders" and weakly-controlled frontiers between states, as for example in one recent history of the movements across the Straits of Malacca separating British Malaya from the Dutch East Indies in the late colonial period (Tagliacozzo 2005). For Southeast Asia in particular the roots of such porosity may be traced even further back, with the common portrayal of pre-colonial kingdoms as based not on their territoriality or through tightly delineated borders, but on the control of populations through nested hierarchies of political fealty. The idea that the power of a kingdom derived from its "exemplary centre" defined ancient polities and fit well with pragmatic concerns for control and surplus extraction from agrarian societies. Greater political concern for the centre rather than the borders continued to characterize much of the region during the period of European colonial domination through the exigencies of policies favouring indirect rule. Such received practices of largely uncontrolled population movement accorded well with certain practices of colonial rule as foreign workers could be easily recruited from elsewhere to fulfill labour needs in the colonies, as for example with the importation of south Indians to work on the growing plantations of British Malaya and Ceylon, or with the unrestricted movement of merchants and labourers out of southern China, whose

presence in the colonies formed a sort of ethnic buffer between local populations and European colonialists throughout the region.

It is from these movements in the late colonial period that we may discern the roots of post-colonial ethnic diversity, a forebear of current Asian multiculturalism, though one which is perhaps different from what is now promoted in European and North American contexts, a point to be examined in more detail later. It is also useful to point out the position of the city in this respect as well. Although cities were crucial in the colonial period both as administrative centres as well as points of connection for the long-distance trade back to the European metropoles, it has been convincingly argued that the overall effect of the period of colonial control in Asia was to dampen or even reverse the speed of urbanization, as the extractive economies of colonialism were focused first and foremost on primary commodities, thereby requiring native populations to remain in rural settings despite high rates of population growth induced by colonial labour policies (Reid 1988). Not incidentally this is also seen to be a period that has been labeled as the "golden age of the peasantry" (Elson 1997), not as a pre-colonial condition, but rather as one that grew directly out of European interests. As for patterns of population movement in the late colonial period, we should consider as well that this was largely a "rural manifestation" in keeping with the interests of capitalism at that time (Breman 1997, p. 4), something quite different from the increasingly urban-focused patterns of movement that characterize the present-day.

Rather than seeing the current situation of increasing porosity and unrestricted movement as a continuity with the past, however, we should be careful to understand the historic discontinuities that separate the late colonial period from the present day. Foremost among these was the rise of regimes of border control as a globally-influential institutional development in the historic evolution of the nation-state (Morris-Suzuki 2006). By the late 19th century, passports, which had hitherto functioned more as niceties to ensure class privilege by travelling elites, came to be used as universal requirements for entry, first by the white settler nations of North America (McKeown 2008). It is perhaps a cruel twist of history that the unfettered movements of people in Asia that had fostered the formation of significant systems of migration within the region were perceived as threatening when viewed from afar, with the result that new anti-Asian regimes of border control were put in place, effectively delimiting movements of Asian population to the territories of Asia itself.

A second factor underpinning the hardening of state boundaries over the course of the twentieth century was the rise of nationalism within the colonies (including putative colonies such as Siam or China). Although one may argue that it was only through the ideological force of nationalism that the colonies were able to achieve their independence, it is also because of nationalist sentiments that the newly decolonized nations of the region sought increasing control over their national borders. Thus it is only through

nationalism in the late colonial and early post-colonial period that territorial integrity came to be seen as a hallmark of the newly-forming nation-states (Anderson 1983; Winichakul 1994). And here one might emphasize the recentness of these consequential developments by the example of the border between Malaysia and Indonesia (the same porous border investigated by Tagliacozzo) which had remained open and uncontrolled until Indonesian President Soekarno's policy of Konfrontasi with Malaysia in 1964 – leading to an historic closing of a border that is still remembered by older informants today (Lindquist 2009).

Although the current rapid growth of transborder flows in Southeast Asia may be seen in one sense to build upon a long history of porous, even non-existent, borders, current circumstances are based on very different notions of border control, derived from the modern idea of the sovereignty of the nation-state. In this respect, current regimes of border control within the region can be understood as manifestations of a global phenomenon, the development and entrenchment of the nation-state as the central organizing motif of the global political system. Central to the notion of the modern nation-state is the goal of making a people coterminous with the territory they inhabit; the conscious construction of nationalism in pursuit of this goal thus has an exclusionary outcome, as it necessarily delineates the otherness of non-nationals, and often casts as problematic the inclusion of ethnic minority populations (Castles 2003). While the coming of the nation-state may have brought with it greater expectations of entitlements for its citizens, it has generated as well significant costs of exclusion. When viewed in this way, we can understand how this system of population movement is remarkably new – having originated only since the 1970s – despite the depth of historic experiences that preceded it.

Systems of movement in Asia

One may look to the idea of a migration system as a heuristic device, a geographically based template on which to pin the various international flows of people in the hope of drawing some sense of order to this most disorderly set of human activities. Mapping the dominant flows of migrants across the various nation-states of a migration system thus helps us to discern the structural elements that channel the agency of myriad individual migrants. At its root, a system is defined as simply "two or more countries which exchange migrants with each other" (Castles 2000, p. 24), though in practice such dyadic systems are often overlapped or linked in order to encapsulate broader regional or trans-regional movements. The overarching, or globally-acting, Asia Pacific system identified by Massey et al, for example, focused not only on the important nodes of the main receiving countries within Asia, but included the significant Asian flows between this system and the other major global systems, most significantly the North American system and the Arabian Gulf system (Massey, et al. 1998). The focus on nation-states as the basis of analysis is likewise a

heuristic, derived in practical terms from the means by which data are collected regarding transborder movement, and in conceptual terms from modern ideas of national border control. Nonetheless, it is increasingly understood through detailed research that significant population flows occur between often very specific locales, though such trans-local - rather than trans-national – movement may be obscured by data collection and analysis undertaken at national levels.

Within the broader Asia Pacific system, significant subsystems may therefore be identified, such as that of Northeast Asia, focused on the receiving countries of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, while movement in Southeast Asia is often further subdivided into two major systems, organized around the Mekong region with Thailand as the principal receiving country and an archipelagic ASEAN system, with Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei as the primary destination countries (Kaur 2007; Hugo 2004a). As one would expect with such messy human activities, migration system boundaries are not necessarily as clearly delineated as nation-state boundaries, with, for example, large numbers of Thai nationals crossing their border into Malaysia. An example such as this points to the importance of local historical factors, and in this instance, the shared cultural and religious affinities between Muslim southern Thailand and the north of peninsular Malaysia. Historical and cultural factors that shape significant flows often derive from the post-coloniality which characterizes much of the region - as current national boundaries do not necessarily reflect pre-existing ethnic groupings – as well as from contemporary political situations, as with the many North Koreans who have crossed over their border into China. Thus it can also be said that the tendency to categorize the countries of the region into sending, receiving, or in some cases both (see Table 1), is also a heuristic convention, meant to bring clarity to an otherwise potentially obscure situation.

Table 1

Sending countries (mostly emigration)

Philippines	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Laos	China	Sri Lanka
Indonesia	Vietnam	India	Pakistan	Burma	Nepal

Receiving countries (mostly immigration)

South Korea	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	Hong Kong	Brunei

Both (significant immigration and emigration)

Malaysia	Thailand

Asian nations classified according to their international labour migration situation (source: Hugo 2006).

Indeed, at the margins, every country may be said to be both a sending and receiving country, a point which requires us to consider the various flows of international migrants in terms of relative magnitude as well as to disaggregate the flows according to specific categories of migrants. This first point, the question of scale or magnitude of migrant flows, presents tremendous challenges of estimation. For one thing, official data sources are

all too often notoriously inaccurate, reflective not only of the technical challenge of monitoring such large-scale data collection, but indicating as well the potential for statistical manipulation for political and other reasons (Hugo 2006). As well, the basic point that regimes of regulatory control throughout the region are based on temporary migration and are meant to inhibit long-term or permanent settlement inadvertently creates incentives for undocumented or illegal migration in many cases, as for example the large numbers of Indonesians who have clandestinely entered Malaysia, or the increasing number of visa over-stayers in Japan. Beyond the many blatant subversions of formal border control regimes such as these, one can also find instances of more official accommodation that likewise skew statistics; one example here is the Japanese practice of "training courses" where foreigners are allowed into the country ostensibly as students though in reality spend their time working in low-level jobs at below-minimum wages (Hugo, 2004b, p. 90). Searching through published reports, therefore, can at best provide us with rough estimates of a complex and dynamic situation with often mismatched levels of emigration and immigration, depending upon whether one is looking at figures from sending or receiving countries (see tables 2 and 3).

Table 2

Origin Countries	Number	Main Destinations	Year
Southeast Asia			
Burma	1,100,000	Thailand	2001
Thailand	340,000	Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Burma, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia	2002
Laos	173,000	Thailand	2004
Cambodia	200,000	Malaysia, Thailand	1999
Vietnam	340,000	Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan	2004
Philippines	4,750,000	Middle East, Malaysia, Thailand, Korea, Hong Kong	2005
Malaysia	250,000	Japan, Taiwan	1995
Singapore	150,000	-	2002
Indonesia	2,000,000	Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, UAE	2001
Total (SE) Asia	8,313,000		
South Asia			
India	3,100,000	Middle East	2002
Pakistan	3,180,973	Middle East, Malaysia	1999
Bangladesh	3,000,000	Saudi Arabia, Malaysia	2002
Sri Lanka	1,500,000	Middle East, Malaysia	2004
Nepal	4,000,000	Middle East, India, Malaysia	2003
Total (S Asia)	1 4,780,973		
Northeast Asia			
China	530,000	Middle East, Asia Pacific Region, Africa	2004
North Korea	300,000	China	2002
South Korea	632,000	Japan	2002
Japan	61,000	Hong Kong	2000
Total (NE Asia)	1,523,000		

Estimates of stocks of Asian migrant workers in other countries
(source: Hugo 2006 – see for sources of information)

Tab. 3

Country	Stock of Migrants	Year
Japan	870,000	2004
South Korea	423,597	2004
Taiwan	600,177	2003
Singapore	580,000	2004
Malaysia	1,359,500	2004
Thailand	1,623,776	2004
Brunei	91,800	1999
Hong Kong	216,863	2003
Macau	27,000	2000
China	90,000	2003
Vietnam	30,000	2001
Indonesia	91,736	2004
Philippines	9,168	2003
Bhutan	40,350	2004
Total	6,053,967	

Estimated stocks of foreign migrants in Asian countries
(source: Hugo 2006 – see for sources of information)

While for various specific policy reasons there may be a number of ways to disaggregate or subdivide these flows of migrants – according to employment categories or economic sectors, for example – recent summary reviews of population movement in the region typically make a broad slice dividing skilled and unskilled (or alternatively, high skilled and low skilled) labour migrants, with the second category further broken down by documented and undocumented flows (Hugo 2008; Stahl 2003; Kaur 2007), and with even further attention given to gender differentials within migrant flows in order to examine the increasing feminization of migration in recent years. In these resulting categories, driven as they are by pragmatic policy concerns, one may also discern the underlying logic of the current phase of neo-liberal globalization as it is manifested in the region. It has been argued that as international borders have become increasingly permeable to flows of goods, capital, information, ideas, and so forth, it is the flows of labour, of people, that continue to be constrained, an indication of the difficult politics of identity and entitlement that accompany the formation and persistence of nation-states. Differentiating labour migrants by skill level does not lead to fine gradations of capability, as one might expect to find in any population, but to a sharply segmented division between those whose skills or personal attributes are of high value to the production processes of globally-acting capitalism, and those whose potential labour contribution is instead deemed to be readily substitutable or even disposable. On the one hand, then, one finds a globally transportable technical, professional and managerial class, whose movements are often seen to coincide with or accompany the investments of transnational capital, while on the other, there is something like a global underclass, who are given acronyms in the academic and policy literatures such as TLM (temporary labour migrants) or OCW (overseas contract workers). Although there is a good bit of interest in the academic literature in this first group, it is the second that concerns us here, as these are the migrants who are least attended to, either through policy or market, and who are thus most open to abuse.

The observation that in many instances throughout the region significant components of these low- or unskilled TLMs are undocumented and

therefore living legally precarious lives with little recourse to state protection, should be taken as a clear indication of the complexity of politics surrounding their movement and presence in countries other than their own. In short, and by way of broad generalization (or simplification of what can in practice be enormously complex), their labour is needed in their new country (thus providing the economic rationale for their movement) though their presence may be seen to be threatening in one way or another to the local, native citizenry. Their undocumented status, the "illegality" to which the state "turns a blind eye" can be taken not as a contradiction nor an outright abrogation of the law, but as a means by which the state (or, more properly in many instances, local state actors) are able to simultaneously address sharply divergent interests among their constituents. A common example is when the state's blind eye avoids seeing the migrant labourer who is working at below minimum wages, or doing "3D" work (dangerous, dirty or demeaning) that locals won't touch, thus responding to the desires of businessmen, large or small, while simultaneously its strident voice calls for tighter controls at the border in an attempt to pander to the xenophobic tendencies of post-colonial nationalism in society overall.

The third slice, differentiating between female and male migrants in recent flows, has also grown in importance due to ongoing changes in the structures of employment in the receiving countries of the region. While much of the feminization of labour migration over previous generations was in reference to internal migration in countries in the region, principally rural to urban migration, as newly locating industries expressed a preference for female workers, much of the current feminization seen in international movements derives from increasing numbers of local women in receiving countries joining the workforce and in turn hiring OCWs as domestic servants to replace their labour in the household. In this way, we find the "unskilled" labour of the international migrant worker substituting for the seemingly "skilled" labour of the emergent professional class, former housewife, with the resulting economic differential due to this substitution accruing to the household.

To make this abstract example a bit more concrete, one could consider the case of a female OCW TLM from Indonesia working as a domestic servant for a household in Malaysia, substituting the domestic labour of the principal woman in the household thus allowing her to get a job and, in so doing, help to strengthen, or at least maintain, the household's position in the middle class, both economically and socially[3]. This pattern has been a rapidly growing trend in many of the receiving countries of the region in recent years, with, in the case of Singapore, one out of every six households employing a servant from overseas (Yeoh and Huang 2003, p. 345). From such an example, we are able to see some of the factors that have been spurring on the growth of transborder population movements in recent years.

First, and perhaps foremost from an economic perspective, is the sharp differential in wages between Malaysia and Indonesia, whereby an Indonesian migrant worker may be able to make five to ten times the amount of money in Malaysia as they would back home, even if they are working at a job, such as domestic servant, where the salary is insufficient to attract a local, non-migrant worker. Second, in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia, geography is a facilitating factor, as a shared border lessens the travel costs of the potential migrant compared to someone coming from further afield. A third factor is demographic differences between the two countries, with Malaysia much further along in its demographic transition than Indonesia. The follow-on implications of this are that, in general, Malaysia has (and increasingly will have) a more rapidly aging population and hence a declining labour force relative to employment growth[4], and for our example here, the Malaysian ex-housewife will likely be older and better educated than either her Indonesian servant is or her Malaysian forebears were at similar stages in their lives.

The importance of factors such as these, and the idea that they are so sharply differentiated across a boundary as arguably arbitrary as that of an international border reinforces just how crucial the unevenness of development has been for the countries of the region, and how consequential this is for patterns of international migration. In an effort to re-jig an existing mnemonic, the Global Commission on International Migration has sought to define a new set of "3Ds" that underpin migration, the differences in development, demography and democracy between nations (Hugo 2008, p. 3; Rigg and Wong 2010); the first two of these factors have been discussed here, while the third is an indication of the potential importance of political liberalization in shaping migrants' life decisions.

A closer look: Indonesians in Malaysia

Malaysia is selected here for more detailed examination not because it is somehow typical of the region, as indeed any claim to typicality would be belied by the wide diversity of social, political and economic conditions found across the countries of Asia. In fact, the contrary case could be made that Malaysia is exceptional within the region since as much as one quarter of its labour force in recent decades has been foreign-born, the highest proportion of any Asian country (Wong 2008). Nonetheless, we may look at this one country, and in particular the experiences of Indonesian migrants there, for the insights this may offer regarding a number of the basic issues and processes that shape the Asian immigrant experience in general. Malaysia is also typical − or exceptional − for particular characteristics of post-colonialism, factors that have direct bearing on attitudes and policies regarding foreign migrant populations. Two points to consider in this regard are the "unnatural" borders inherited from the period of European colonialism and the diverse, multi-ethnic population of the country, again a legacy of its time under British colonial rule.

It is often pointed out how European colonial territoriality has in many instances had little correspondence to local ethno-linguistic boundaries, a factor that has generated major challenges for nation-building throughout the post-colonial world. In regard to Malaysia, the case has been made (most famously by Soekarno, Indonesia's first president) that it comprises one component of a greater Malay nation that also encompasses the modern-day nation-states of Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines. Yet within such a pan-Malay nation ("Maphilindo," in Soekarno's parlance) there exist many diverse subgroups that are understood to make up the various ethnicities of these countries. Historically, the Malay population of present-day Malaysia can be traced back to the islands of what is now Indonesia, with the open border (until 1964) between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and peninsular West Malaysia allowing for ongoing family connections until quite recently. Similarly, one can also point to the unnatural border between Malaysia and Thailand that was brokered between the British and the Siamese court, with the Muslim, Malay-speaking Pattani comprising the majority population in the southern states of Thailand. In discussions of transborder migration into Malaysia, much explanatory power is ascribed to the cultural affinities between Malays and Indonesians (as well as between Malays and Thai Pattanis) for interpreting the facility of cross-border movement; in practice, however, such presumably primordial categories intersect uneasily with more modern notions of nationality and citizenship.

Figure 1. Map of Malaysia
(source: http://reference.allrefer.com/world/countries/malaysia/map.html)

Malaysia, and in particular the more populous part of West Malaysia[5], is also noted for its post-colonial ethnic diversity and official policies in support of multiculturalism. Although ethnic diversity within the Malay population has now largely been superseded through efforts of Malay (and Malaysian) nationalism which have promoted a unifying notion of Malay-ness, the overall Malaysian population also includes large minority populations of Chinese (more than 30%) and Indian (approximately 10%)

extraction, the descendants of Chinese and Indian migrants who came in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to contribute to (and benefit from) the British colonial economy. Much of Malaysia's political affairs revolve around maintaining a careful balance between the interests of these three ethnic groups, particularly those of the Malays, who are politically dominant by virtue of the nation's constitution, and the Chinese, who are seen to control economic power.

It is within this particular socio-economic and ethnic mix that one seeks to position the question of immigration. Within the rapidly evolving developmental milieu of Asia overall, Malaysia holds the distinction of being simultaneously a country of immigration and emigration, a country seemingly balanced in the middle of a migration transition. Here one must consider issues of skill level and class as well as ethnicity in order to understand this situation. Emigrants from Malaysia over recent decades have tended to be those of Chinese and Indian ancestry and have tended as well to be from the educated and professional classes. One may argue that this "brain drain" has been as much politically motivated as due to economic circumstances, since many who have left have done so because Malaysian affirmative action policies, designed to promote the position of the Malays relative to non-Malay minorities, are seen to limit the potential for meritocratic advancement.

This situation has begun to change somewhat since the 1990s, as the state's developmental discourse began to focus on a strategy of advanced high-technology innovation and production. One implication of this strategy has been the establishment of policies to attract "knowledge workers" who will participate in advancing Malaysia's "k-economy." Though one focus of this push has been to attract back overseas Malaysians, the net has been cast more broadly than this, with many new professional class immigrants coming from elsewhere, especially India, to take up jobs in high-tech and knowledge-based industries (Bunnell 2002)[6]. In this we see the first important categorical distinction in Malaysian immigration policy, between highly skilled and low or unskilled immigrants, with skilled, international knowledge workers supported and welcomed under the rubric of "multiculturalism," while low skilled immigrants are at best tolerated as temporary workers who are willing to take on the jobs no longer desired by Malaysian themselves. It is to this category of unskilled workers – which in Malaysia's case consist largely of Indonesians – that we now turn our attention; not only do they make up the vast majority of Malaysia's immigrants, the ones who comprise as much as a quarter of the national workforce, they are also the ones for whom questions of inclusion and entitlement are most salient.

It is helpful here to review the history of Indonesian migration into Malaysia since the time of independence in order to understand how this situation came about[7]. Like many newly independent nations in the period of decolonization in the 50s and 60s, Malaysia set in place legislation

8. The terms "irregular" and "undocumented" are used interchangeably here. Wong and Anwar (2003) mention that the term " illegal migrant" (pendatang haram – literally "forbidden migrant") first came into popular use in the 1980s in reference to "boat-people" arriving from Vietnam, and has gained greater traction in recent years as popular discourse has turned increasingly anti-migrant.

stipulating controls of its border and carefully delimiting who may and may not obtain employment within its national territory. The first major stresses on this system of establishing a right to employment as an entitlement of citizenship came about in a somewhat ironic fashion, as an unintended consequence of a major government program clearing new lands for agricultural production as a means toward ending landlessness among Malay peasant farmers. The establishment of this scheme, the Federal Land Development Authority (or FELDA), in the late 1950s, coincided with the beginnings of Malay urbanization, the result being that by the 1970s, the erstwhile peasants themselves were contracting out the work of land clearance and farming, with Indonesian migrants arriving in Malaysia to take advantage of these opportunities. Thus it can be argued that although the migrants themselves were coming to work in the rural sector, their presence in the country was bound up in ongoing processes of urbanization. By substituting labour in the rural sector, Indonesian immigrants thereby allowed Malay ex-peasants the opportunity to seek their fortunes in the city, thus facilitating the decanting of population from the countryside.

It is also from these early days of Indonesian migration into Malaysia that we see the second important categorical distinction regarding immigrants, between regular or documented migrants and irregular or undocumented migrants[8]. Although in practice there are multiple ways for a migrant to be irregular - from arriving by ship in the middle of the night without documents of any sort, to exiting Indonesia properly but without authorization to enter Malaysia, to "running away" from legal employment once one is legally established in Malaysia - the broad category of irregular (or, more commonly in recent popular discourse, "illegal") migrant constitutes a major component of Malaysia's migrant population, estimated at times to be equal to the total numbers of regular immigrants into the country.

Quantifying the Indonesian migrant presence in Malaysia presents tremendous challenges. Estimates vary based on sources of data, differing sectoral and temporal considerations, whether derived from stocks or flows, and perhaps most challenging of all, the difficult issue of accounting for the undocumented presence and movement of migrants. Even the presumably straightforward task of distinguishing between legal, or documented, and illegal, or undocumented, movements is complicated by such practices as the illegal issuance of legal documents (passports, work permits) by corrupt officials on both sides of the border. The use of large numbers of such "aspal" (asli tapi palsu, original but fake) documents issued in Indonesia calls into question the meanings of legal and illegal and requires an additional category of "semi-formal" migrants in order to account for the wide discrepancies between official arrival and departure statistics for Indonesians in Malaysia (Ford 2006). And once in Malaysia, one may find irregular migrants who have

arranged to become regularized through the informal arrangement of illegally issued work permits, thus further blurring the lines between regular and irregular, formal and informal.

As the basis for a rough estimate, one can point to official figures of more than 1.47 million registered foreign residents in Malaysia at the time of the financial crisis in 1997 (Kaur 2006), with this figure typically coupled with a much more anecdotally based estimate of a 1:1 ratio of documented to undocumented migrants, adding a million or more to the official figures (Wong 2006). Another rough figure was referred to by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed in his speech calling for the expulsion of migrants at the time of the crisis: "The country cannot go on depending on foreign workers. We have 20 million people and 1.7 million foreign workers. If we allow this to go on we would risk losing control of our country" (Wong and Anwar 2003, p 181). Of these foreign residents, the vast majority – between 67% and 85% of the totals, depending upon the source and methods of the estimation – come from Indonesia, with additional major sources of migrants being Thailand and Bangladesh.

The Malaysian government has responded to the presence of such large numbers of undocumented foreign workers through a series of amnesties and deportation campaigns since the early 1990s[9], campaigns seemingly, if unintentionally, linked to Malaysia's economic cycles (Ford 2006), leading Malaysian policy and practice to be characterized as having "a stop-go quality" in one World Bank report from the 1990s (Wong and Anwar 2003, p 179). A Malaysian government freeze on formal labour migration from Indonesia following the financial crisis of the late 1990s resulted in complaints from Malaysian businesses, who pressured the government to once again allow the hiring of foreign labour. The outcome since then has been a system for recruiting foreign labour only outside of Malaysia. By this process, a recruited worker is issued a calling visa while in Indonesia which is then converted into a work permit at the time of entry in Malaysia (Wong and Anwar 2003, p 181). In contrast to informal channels, whereby migrants may freely, though illegally, access the Malaysian labour market, by choosing to remain legal and use the work permit system, a migrant is restricted not only to one type of work, but to one employer, as it is required that the migrant exit the country in order to change jobs or renew a work contract. This close tying of the migrant worker to the employer has important implications for the vulnerability of the migrant. Whereas an undocumented, and thereby "illegal," foreign migrant is accorded no legal rights nor protection under Malaysian law whatsoever, a registered foreign worker theoretically has protection under labour legislation, though this is easily made moot through the dismissal of a migrant worker from his or her job. Employers thus have tremendous power over legally documented migrant workers, as their ability to terminate a contract can determine the migrant's legal status (Shamsulbahriah 2003; Gurowitz 2000, p. 868).

9. The single largest campaign of deportation came in 2002, with close to 400,000 Indonesians expelled to ports on the island of Sumatra and, in East Malaysia, to the city of Pontianak and the border town of Nunukan. The expulsion of such large numbers to Nunukan in particular triggered a humanitarian crisis, leading to strains in bilateral relations between Indonesia and Malaysia (Ford 2006).

A further disincentive for a prospective migrant to follow the formal migration system has been the foreign worker levy imposed on employers by the government. In theory, this levy is to be paid by the employer as a cost of their business, though in practice these costs are often deducted from the migrants' wages. The work permit system is also intended as the mechanism by which the temporary status of the migrant is to be assured. Workers are recruited overseas, limited to working for a specified (one to three-year) contract period, and then repatriated at the end of their contract. In practice, the sector of employment for which the system has proven to be most readily enforceable has been that of domestic servant, a sector that has grown quickly in recent years. In contrast to other employment sectors, where overstaying and job desertion are common, household servants are more easily monitored and controlled on a one-by-one basis; as employers are legally responsible for making sure that their employee is sent back to Indonesia at the end of her contract, most take it upon themselves to ensure that their employees comply. This has had the somewhat unexpected follow-on effect that not only have migrant streams from Indonesia to Malaysia become more distinctly gendered in recent years due to increases in household employment of (almost universally female) foreign domestic servants, but it is the women who comprise the vast majority of regular, documented migrants (as much as 80% by 2006 figures), while men prefer the irregular channels of undocumented movement (Lindquist 2010).

It should be pointed out in all of this that there is a recurring problem of terminology when discussing the illegal, undocumented, irregular and informal movement of migrants from Indonesia into Malaysia, not only because of the political meanings carried by particular terms, or the fact that a good many of such migrants have legal documents (albeit obtained through illegal means), but the processes and paths by which they cross the border and establish themselves in Malaysia are often quite specific and regularized, if not exactly "formal." In recent years it has become common, especially in the anthropological and sociological literatures (Lindquist 2009; 2010; Wong and Anwar 2003), to speak of a "migration industry" as an established, predictable means by which passage, employment, housing and other requirements are arranged through a series of middlemen or brokers (called calo in Indonesian or taikong in Malay). Again, in practice, legal distinctions may be fuzzy, as these often carefully structured business networks share many of the characteristics of the fully "formal" international labour recruitment agencies and may in fact overlap with them. Although the migration industry, like all industries, is ultimately driven by an economic logic, detailed examination shows that in many instances transactions in the industry are built upon what may be personalistic relations between layers of brokers, sponsors, migrants and migrants' families (Lindquist 2010), a factor which has great relevance for

determining highly particular chains of movement, from specific villages in Indonesia, to specific settlements and economic activities in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere in Malaysia. The migration industry serves a fundamental purpose with regard to the human transactions across the Indonesian/Malaysian border, and in so doing should be understood to be an established, long-term institution, even if the migrants themselves (and even some of the brokers) may be short-term or temporary.

From its rural origins in the FELDA schemes and plantation sector in the 1970s, the Indonesian migration into Malaysia became an increasingly urban phenomenon over time, with the urban construction industry in particular becoming highly dependent upon Indonesian labour during the boom years of the 1980s. Over time, Indonesian migrants, both regular and irregular, have entered other niches of the urban economy, becoming involved in manufacturing and service industries (particularly as domestic servants), and increasingly in petty street trading and other informal activities, though such self-employment is perforce illegal under Malaysian migration law. By the late 1990s, it was estimated that as many as 80% of foreign migrants were concentrated in Malaysia's four most urbanized states – Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (which essentially comprise the Kuala Lumpur conurbation), Johor (adjacent to Singapore), and Penang (Azizah 2000).

Malaysian labour laws stipulate that employers must provide accommodations for their migrant workers, though these regulations do not of course apply in the case of irregular migrants. Construction workers, for example, are often provided with makeshift communal accommodations (kongsi) at or adjacent to their worksites, and domestic servants typically live with their employers' families. This period of rapid urbanization of Indonesian migrants, over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, also corresponded with the ongoing urbanization of rural Malays. And here it may be useful to understand that the Indonesians, who typically originated from rural areas of their country (Wong and Anwar 2003), were also rural-urban migrants, although an international boundary separated their villages of origin from the cities to which they headed. What might be described as a somewhat symbiotic relationship arose over this period, with Malays acting as landlords on squatter or Malay reserve lands, accommodating the growing numbers of Indonesian migrants (Azizah 2000). Over time, there was an increasing consolidation of Indonesian squatter settlements as migrants progressed from renting rooms and small houses from Malays to establishing their own settlements, sometimes on squatted reserve lands as well as on purchased lands that were illegally developed.

Due to their large numbers, Indonesians now have a strong and visible presence in Malaysia's capital and largest city, Kuala Lumpur, most notably in central areas such as Chow Kit and Kampung Baru, which had in the past been seen as Malay strongholds in what historically had been a largely non-Malay city. It has been argued that it is the increasing visibility of the

10. Who, not incidentally, are considered to be the original settlers of the Malaysian state of Negri Sembilan.
11. Research on the extensiveness of circular and seasonal migration in (domestic) Indonesian population movements was pioneered in the work of Hugo three decades ago, challenging conceived notions of rural-to-urban migration and giving insights into what we now understand to be instances of translocalism – see Hugo, 1982, by way of summary.

Indonesians as a result of urbanization that has prompted a backlash and a discursive shift in how they are portrayed in both popular political discourse and in policy terms (Wong and Anwar 2003). Diana Wong, in particular, argues in her analysis of immigration policy since 2002 that the Malaysian government is now seeking to establish a more incontrovertible "guestworker" policy regime in an effort to reduce the number of Indonesian migrants while still assuaging the concerns of business leaders interested in access to pools of low-cost labour. Not only was there a shift to a "hire Indonesians last" policy, but the government published a list of countries to receive preferential treatment for the recruitment of foreign labour, including among others, Vietnam, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - though pointedly not Indonesia (Wong 2006). Evidently the cultural affinities to Malaysia's Malay population that had in the past facilitated the establishment and rapid growth of a large Indonesian population in Malaysia are now to their detriment; future overseas recruitment of labour is now to be predicated on cultural distance, so as to better ensure the conditions that workers will return home at the end of their contracts.

Underpinning these concerns, is, of course, the question of whether the movement of Indonesians into Malaysia should be understood as a long-term or permanent phenomenon or whether the Malaysian government will eventually achieve its goals of only allowing low and unskilled migrants in as temporary guestworkers. One may argue that with such a scale of international migrants, large sectors of the Malaysian economy have become structurally dependent upon them. Furthermore, institutional consolidation in support of the movement and presence of Indonesian migrants in Malaysia indicates a form of permanence, even if individual migrants may be coming and going. Under such conditions, one must also enquire as to whether the migrant's temporary status – whether mythic or not – has been internalized by the migrants themselves. In this respect, much has been made over the years in the Indonesian migration literature of cultural practice of merantau, a form of coming of age for male children requiring them to travel away from home for an extended period of time. Originating from a famously matrilineal ethnic group (the Minangkabau of West Sumatra[10]), it has been argued that the idea of merantau has by now become a key trope in Indonesian culture in general and "going rantau" is no longer the exclusive preserve of either the Minangkabau or of young males (Lindquist 2009).

Certainly, such a reified cultural practice reinforces notions of translocalism as are apparent in the circularity of rural to urban migrant streams[11]. The usual explanation of Indonesian circular migration lies in what Massey et al (1998) refer to as the "new economics of migration," a theoretical position which argues that the decision to move is not based on the idea of utility maximization by the individual but is reflective of collective (family or community) desires. Put simply, the migrant goes to the city as a way of diversifying risk and thus improving the long-term

prospects for the family in the countryside. Considering that the standard trajectory of Indonesian migrant's move a neighbourhood such as Kampong Baru begins in the Indonesian countryside, we can see that much of Kuala Lumpur's development really has been a form of transnational urbanism. The Malaysian government's insistence that all foreign workers be allowed only temporary status in the country reinforces this form of transnationalism, as Indonesian migrants, both regular and irregular, legal and illegal, are forced by circumstances to maintain good connections back to their places of origin.

In any case, the question of permanence will only really be answered over time. And it would indeed be a tremendous challenge to understand and summarize the motivational characteristics of such an enormous population – perhaps two million or more. At present, however, and for the immediate future, the rise of xenophobic attitudes toward migrants in Malaysia – especially those who are seen to be "illegal" – is a worrisome trend, perhaps reflective of what is happening in many countries of the world during the current economic downturn. It has been pointed out that, like the current surge in migration around the world, another concomitant of globalization has been the rise of civil society groups, yet in the case of Malaysia, the increasingly lively "NGO sector" has so far given little attention to the conditions and issues of foreign migrants workers. As argued by Gurowitz, this is one instance where the country's multiculturalism may be counterproductive to advancing the interests of migrants; rather than setting a context which might be welcoming of ethnic others, Malaysian multiculturalism is instead understood to be a key part of maintaining a careful balance between the existing ethnic groups within the country, a balance which could be upset by the extension of entitlements to non-citizens, and especially resident Indonesians (Gurowitz 2000). And a further potential source of recourse in defense of migrants' rights, the appeal to international norms and agreements, is also of limited value in Malaysia, as activists who might use such a strategy risk being branded as "pawns of the West" under the prevailing anti-western discourse of mainstream Malaysian politics (ibid. p. 864)[12].

Instead of a significant civil society response in support of migrants' rights in Malaysia[13], what one finds instead is the troubling emergence and rapid growth since 2004 of a very different type of non-state (or perhaps "quasi-non-state") response, a sharp reaction against the migrants by an organization named the People's Volunteer Corps (Ikatan Relawan Rakyat, or Rela for short). This organization, which has been described as a key part of Malaysia's "peculiarly populist and strangely spectacular approach to apprehending 'illegal migrants'" (Hedman 2008, pp 371-72), has worked in concert with Malaysian police assisting in expulsion campaigns against Indonesians and other migrants, though perhaps more often operates independently, patrolling territories where they expect to find undo-

12. Gurowitz also argues that pressures for the protection of migrant workers' rights are also unlikely to come from sending governments, as they have vested interests due to the scale of remittances sent back by migrants. A recent analysis of remittances to Indonesia by Hugo shows not only their rapid growth over recent decades, but their importance, due to the effects of chain migration, in some of the poorest districts in the country. It is widely acknowledged that official data severely underestimate the scale of remittances, which are "likely to be greater than earnings from Indonesian agricultural exports and perhaps as great as nonoil and gas export earnings" (Hugo 2008a, p. 53).
13. One notable exception to this, however, is the work of Tenagakita (www.tenaganita.net), an organization whose mission "is to undertake research, advocacy and action to prevent, solve and address grave abuses that happen to migrants and refugees."
14. See:http://www.mfasia.org/mfaStatements/F95-MalaysiaBarResolution.html

cumented migrants. With recent (2007) membership estimates of as much as 475,000, this armed, paramilitary force has been noted on numerous occasions for its heavy-handedness and abusive behaviour against migrants, resulting in calls for its disbandment by the Malaysian Bar[14].

From this brief overview of the situation of Indonesian migrants in Malaysia, we find a number of circumstances comparable to those elsewhere in Asia, especially the effects of uneven development between neighbouring nation-states, and the, at times, deep ambiguity in both policy and public opinion, as degrees of friendliness or disdain toward migrants have vacillated in response to both economic circumstances and the exigencies of politics. Nonetheless, it is striking just how far the pendulum can swing (and has swung), as Indonesian migrants have been transformed over the course of recent decades from ethnic brothers to foreign others, an indication of the critical importance of nationalism and other markers of identity in shaping the outcomes of international migration.

Conclusions: toward a research agenda

Considering the current poor state of international migration statistics in Asian countries (Hugo 2006), one would be hard-pressed to demonstrate quantitatively that the urbanization of migrant streams is an empirical fact. Yet the realities of the region's ongoing urban transitions support this conclusion. As increasing proportions of national populations shift to urban locales, greater economic opportunities are generated by urban economies, in turn attracting more migrants, both domestic and foreign. In this way, cities in Asia, as elsewhere, are the products of human migration. Even in cases where international migrants are moving to expressly rural settings, urbanization is still implicated, as we saw in the labour substitution effects in Malaysia's FELDA schemes, or with the recent but rapidly growing phenomenon of "migrant marriages" of foreign women to bachelor farmers in post-urban transition countries such as Taiwan and Korea (Hsia 2007; Wang 2007; Lim 2010; Schipper 2010).

For those migrants who are moving directly to foreign cities, the question of accommodation is paramount: how is one to live in a new city, a new society, especially if one does not hold the proper documents allowing them to do so legally? In the case of Indonesians in Malaysia, as with many other cases throughout the region, the so-called migration industry, the networks of brokers, arrangers and other middlemen, greatly facilitate not only the movement of migrants but often arrange for their jobs and accommodations in their new city. The intertwining of these networks with other social and kinship networks at both places of origin and destination challenges one to think beyond the economic instrumentality of this as an industry per se, and to see this as one component, albeit a critical one, of the broader system of chain migration. In this regard, Wong and Anwar (2003) caution against using the national label of 'Indonesian' in their analysis, in favor of more specific ethnic markers for immigrants, such as

Acehnese, Minang or Mandailing from Sumatra. Focusing a narrower lens on specific migration flows allows us to understand the importance of history in shaping place-to-place connectivities and in so doing provides an argument for seeing these as translocal phenomena, rather than merely transnational. Hugo, for example, recounts the case of the tiny island of Bawean (pop 66,000), also known as the 'Island of Women', whose culture of temporary migration (first to Sumatra, later to Singapore and Malaysia) is said to date back to the 17th century. So many Baweanese live off-island at any one time that they showed up as a distinct group in Singapore as early as the 1894 census and had increased to 22,000 by the time of the 1957 census (Hugo 2004a).

For many migrants in many cities around the world, accommodation has meant the formation over time of ethnic neighbourhoods or enclaves, a process whose history may be discerned in some instances, such as in Jakarta or Singapore, by urban place names specifying locales for particular ethnic groups, though strikingly not for others, as in the case of Seoul, which is seen to historically not had immigrant enclave neighbourhoods (Seol 2010). But current trends in international migration tend to diverge from the historic pattern of enclave formation, creating instead what might by contrast be referred to as interstitial accommodation within the city. For regular, or documented, migrants in a number of basic categories of employment, it is common for employers to be required to provide housing – live-in accommodation for household servants, on-site (though often self-built) housing for construction workers, basic dormitories for factory workers and others. The effect of such practices, which are intended to hinder the formation of ethnic neighbourhoods as discrete landscapes of otherness, is to curtail immigrant interactions within the domestic sphere, forcing foreign migrants into public spaces in search of associational life in the city. Famous examples of this are the use of Hong Kong's Star Ferry Terminal or Singapore's Lucky Plaza as Sunday gathering places for Filipina servants on their day off, or the few blocks of Chun-Shan Road in Taipei known as 'Little Philippines' (Huang and Douglass 2009). More common, however, are small shops or cheap eating places that serve as places for meeting or exchanging information, functioning as nodes in dispersed, interstitial networks of accommodation.

The concept of interstitiality might also be said to encompass notions of informality, referring here not only to the informal means by which undocumented migrants gain access to one or another part of the urban economy, through arranging employment or other forms of livelihood, but to the informal and perhaps ad hoc means by which they are forced to deal with access to healthcare and other social services. Such tendencies toward informal practices are argued to be persistent in urban Asia, and may be understood to be the means by which people are able to obtain goods and services which are not provided through either state structures or other formal institutions such as the regulated marketplace[15]. Indeed,

if one considers the idea that undocumented migrants are often forced by their circumstances to seek invisibility from the state's gaze, or otherwise to live in a "zone of exception" (Ostanel 2010), it could be argued that the greater the propensity for informality in a given urban locale, the more capacity it has for accommodating irregular migrants. Specific examples of such accommodation through informality may be seen in how "protection" is arranged by employers of undocumented migrants in Kuala Lumpur, meaning protection as much from harassment by the police as from criminal elements that might take advantage of the migrants' situation (Wong and Anwar 2003), or how migrants in some instances have been able to gain access to low-cost public housing through informal channels of personal patronage (Azizah 2000).

Questions of accommodation also point to the perhaps larger and certainly more complex issue of integration, meaning both the means by which this can occur as well as its consequences. One attempt to theorize this, the idea of segmented assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), tells us that a newcomer does not really integrate with society in its totality, but rather with one or another component within it, and very often in a contingent manner derived from networks, affinities, and other social relations. In other words, class matters – in that social postionality may hinder or advance the potential for acceptance by others, and by specific sets of others. Other identity markers may be critical as well, an observation that helps us to understand the shift over time of Malaysian attitudes toward immigrant Indonesians. The profound shift in Malay public opinion from acceptance to xenophobia occurred over a period characterized as well by fundamental changes in the construction of Malaysian – and especially Malay – identity, driven by such factors as the emergence and consolidation of a Malay middle class and the increasing politicization of questions of Islamic religious practice, the result being a growing divergence of Malay identity away from its Indonesian roots (Spaan et al 2002), with Indonesians now being looked upon as "the other Malays" whose Indonesian-ness unsettles the idea of Malay-ness (Hedman 2008).

Integration also implies the potential for cultural change, and this perhaps more than anything propels the political discourse underlying policies for exclusively temporary migration. The continuing insistence on (and, in some cases, strengthening of) guestworker policy regimes is indeed reminiscent of the European situation a generation or two back, forcing us to consider the question of whether Asian countries in the not-too-distant future may also be engaging new forms of multiculturalism in the ongoing evolution of their own national identities and cultures[16]. One may readily argue that the "permanence" of international migration in Asia is already a fait accompli – given the scale of migration, the degree of structural dependence on migrant labour for both sending and receiving countries, and the sedimentation of societal insti-

tutions surrounding migrant movement and settlement – even if individual migrants still find themselves in a state of flux. Given the observation that official policy regimes emphasizing temporariness tend to foster transnationalism by forcing an aspiring immigrant to maintain a presence of one sort or another in both their old and new countries, one is confronted with a potential irony: the longer that Asian societies postpone their inevitable debates around multiculturalism, the greater the "foreignness" of the so-called newcomers will be. Alternatively, one might imagine that polices and programs for actively welcoming immigrants and facilitating their settlement would be less disruptive to social and cultural practices in the long run.

Perhaps surprisingly, in Japan, a country whose government is famously adamant that migration should be temporary and strictly controlled, there are indications that this is starting to happen, albeit only at local levels in the cities and districts with the highest proportions of foreign residents (Tegtmeyer Pak 2000; Nagy 2010). Noteworthy here are that such efforts at "local internationalization" whereby local governments have independently established programs to help foreign residents in the interest of "multicultural coexistence" seem ultimately aimed at maintaining social harmony and minimizing any disruption to the lives of Japanese residents that the presence of foreigners might entail. It should be noted as well that such programs take care to only target documented migrants (Tegtmeyer Pak 2000, p. 250)); in this way, such practices are seen not to contravene national policies even though they do not derive any support from higher levels of government. It is not surprising that such initiatives are occurring at the level of local government, rather than at higher levels, as it has been noted in other contexts that while national governments set the policies that determine migrant flows, it is the localities that must deal with their consequences (Leaf 2005). Likewise, all of the responsibility for immigrant integration should not be borne by governments, as there are critical roles that civil society can play. In Japan, as in limited form elsewhere in the region, NGOs have started forming, derived in some instances from charitable religious groups or labour organizations (Roberts 2000), that are working to protect the interests of foreign migrant workers.

For thinking about the role of the state regarding migration, Balbo (2009) distinguishes between two types of policy, which he labels as immigration policies and migrants policies. Immigration policies, set by national governments, tend to be driven by concerns for security and discourses of national cohesion, though in practice the application of such policies often engage issues of economic needs at national levels. In contrast, policies concerning migrants themselves are often much more diverse and contingent, as they tend to arise out of local government concerns and are shaped to a large degree by the availability of resources at local levels, as well as by often highly localized experiences regar-

ding interactions between foreign migrants and local residents. What might be thought of as "demand for the city" as differentially expressed by migrants and local citizens may result in a range of outcomes, from tolerance and accommodation to outright repression. In short, nationally promulgated migration policies and locally articulated actions toward migrants themselves may have very different outcomes, as they can be expressive of different attitudes toward migrants and draw upon different resource bases for their implementation.

In essence, then, this is a governance issue, dependent upon both formal and informal relations between central and local governments. At the risk of over-generalizing, it can be pointed out how Asian governments tend to be highly centralized in policymaking, even if, as in certain polities, one finds high degrees of informal practice by local governments leading to divergence in the application of (central) state policy. I have emphasized in this paper the one basic policy generalization across the region, that is, that with a few exceptions international migrants are treated as temporary and thus are restricted in their access to the services and entitlements that are otherwise accorded to local citizens. In terms of what this may mean for local policies, the policies regarding migrants themselves, a search through the available literature indicates an absence of formal policies at local or municipal levels, particularly policies that may be independent or divergent from what is stipulated at national levels. Knowledge of local state practices in many parts of Asia, however, tells us that in practice the actions of local state agencies are not always in accordance with central state policies, leading one to surmise that localities may in practice be more accommodating of foreign migrants than what may be discerned from stated policy.

This observation, coupled with the lack of systematic research attention given to the question of local state actions vis-à-vis foreign migrants, presents an argument for devising a research and advocacy agenda to help guide further inquiry and action. What are the actions and activities carried out by localities in regard to resident foreign migrants? How might these differ from what is stipulated by central state policy? And how much leeway or independence is formally allowed to local governments in setting their own policies? Such questions regarding the state response to the growing phenomenon of international migrants in Asian cities constitute only one part of such an agenda. Other areas of concern that could benefit from systematic and comparative analysis include basic descriptive and analytical questions regarding the means by which migrants live and seek their livelihoods in their new cities. What forms of accommodation are they able to access, and by what means? How are they able to (and are the able to?) access basic services, including health care and education for their children? One might surmise that denial of services to migrants' children and other dependents may be a conscious strategy to hinder their permanent settlement, but are there exceptions to be found in the region? Are migrant populations able to draw upon their own non-state resources in providing such services? Are there possibilities for and limitations to "self-help" approaches?

Further questions to be addressed in a more fully developed research agenda would also engage the nature of the "migration industry," that is, the established institutional structures, both formal and informal, legal and illegal, that shape the flows and connectivities of migrants from their places of origin to their new locales. To what extent are such industries benign or exploitive, and from a normative perspective, what interventions may be envisioned to improve the situation? Such questions imply as well the need to consider the policies and interests of governments in sending countries. Much has been made in recent years of the sudden and unanticipated growth of so-called "remittance economies" that have followed upon the current phase of international migration and that in many cases – in Asia as elsewhere – are manifested in significant foreign exchange earnings in national accounts. Undoubtedly such considerations underpin recent trends in the provision of state-sanctioned (if not state-organized) contract labour migration that has spurred the growth of international movement throughout the region.

A further set of questions, perhaps more sociological in scope, arise from the basic concern for social inclusion of international migrants, whether conceived of as integration or assimilation. Clearly such concerns have implications for culture and identity, issues that in many countries in the region are already in a state of flux due to tensions and uncertainties inherent in national urban transitions. If international migrants must in some fashion negotiate for inclusion in local urban societies, with such inclusion being by its nature partial and contingent, it should be understood that in many (if not most) instances the presence of foreign migrants is not the only issue shaping debates around culture and identity. For perhaps most societies in the region, the ongoing effects of urbanization and globalization ensure that questions of integration and assimilation must at best be articulated in terms of moving targets. A research agenda aimed normatively at fostering immigrant inclusion will therefore need to take into account such interactions and complexities. Indeed, such an agenda requires a specific focus on the nature of receiving societies; from experiences elsewhere we know that inclusion of immigrants is never the exclusive remit of state policy, as it necessarily engages in often quite specific terms other non-state elements of both civil society and the private sector.

In summary then, a developed research agenda for fostering the inclusion of international migrants in the urban societies of Asia should be articulated in broader terms of governance and not just in regard to the role of government per se. There is indeed a pressing need to take on such a task, as the phenomenon of international migration in Asia – even if it is imagined to be temporary by Asian governments – is undoubtedly a permanent feature of urbanization throughout the region.

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