



Transnational Migration in Southeast Asia

# Transnational Migration in Southeast Asia (TRIMSEA)

Spatial Mobilities in a Regional Perspective



Bangkok & Kuala Lumpur,  
27 November - 9 December 2023



## IRASEC Winter School in Social Sciences and Humanities



**POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY



**สถาบันเอเชียศึกษา**  
**INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES**  
Chulalongkorn University  
ศูนย์วิจัยการย้ายถิ่นแห่งเอเชีย  
Asian Research Center for Migration  
ศูนย์ความเป็นเลิศทางวิชาการด้านการย้ายถิ่นแห่งเอเชีย  
Center of Excellence on Migration and Development



**IRASEC**

INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE SUR L'ASIE DU SUD-EST CONTEMPORAINE  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA



**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**

*The Leader in Research & Innovation*

**Institut CONVERGENCES**  
**MIGRATIONS**



**ARI**  
ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
National University of Singapore

## Objective

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The Research Institute of Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC) organises an **annual winter school in the social sciences and humanities**, in collaboration with a range of European and Southeast Asian universities and research centers. The purpose of these workshops is to stimulate discourse and exchange regarding research on Southeast Asia within the scope of social sciences and humanities. IRASEC's winter schools are designed to endorse comparative and regional research methodologies, facilitate the interaction of students, and promote co-tutorship and co-supervision of dissertations for early-career researchers in Southeast Asia, particularly those who exhibit an interest in continuing their studies in France. In 2023, the IRASEC winter school will be dedicated to migration in Southeast Asia:

*Transnational Migration in Southeast Asia (TRIMSEA)  
Spatial Mobilities in a Regional Perspective*

## To whom

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**TRIMSEA** is designed for early career researchers—particularly master's and PhD students—who are interested in exploring the dynamics of human mobility in Southeast Asia and beyond, through a social sciences lens. This winter school immerses students in the latest debates in the field of migration studies, equipping them with theoretical and methodological tools to research migrations and enhance their research proposals. Additionally, a crucial aspect of the program is introducing students to fieldwork activities related to migration studies.

## Why Southeast Asia, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur

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Southeast Asia, with its rich, layered, and intricate history of migrations, is rapidly asserting itself as a vibrant, transnational migration nexus. This region is home to a myriad of migration types. Demographically, the majority of transnational flux aligns with the model of "migrations from below". In this context, the winter school aims to approach transnational migration through the lens of two distinct subpopulations, each facing unique forms of economic, political, and social incorporation: low-paid migrant workers and refugees.

Southeast Asia distinguishes itself through the presence of highly regimented, state-regulated migration industries, which orchestrate the relocation of surplus labor from origin countries to booming economic hubs where migrants provide low-paid labor. Thailand and Malaysia also host sizable refugee populations.

Regardless of the specifics of these individual flows, a common theme is their convergence around the issue of labor as migrants seek a living. This convergence creates a dynamic environment where different types of migrants interact within the workplace, supporting diverse work regimes, segmenting labor markets, defining varied processes of integration in the host country, and shaping an array of "migration careers".

Thus, Southeast Asia presents itself as a compelling empirical case study, while simultaneously providing invaluable insights into migration and labor market segmentation theories.

With approximately 3.6 million low-paid workers, Malaysia is the major regional hub for organized labor migrations, regulated by the state, and implemented by both public and private

actors. In Thailand, labor imports are more loosely institutionalized. Foreign labor also plays a significant role, with anywhere between 4.9 and 6.4 million foreign workers employed in Thailand. A substantial portion of these workers originates from neighboring Myanmar. As such, their status is often unclear, as they frequently move for both security and economic reasons, thus blurring the line between asylum-seeking and labor migrations and questioning the official figure of 100,000 refugees in the country. Malaysia's refugee population reaches 180,000, and is composed mostly of stateless Muslim Rohingyas from Myanmar. Neither of the two countries has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention on refugees, instead relying on ad-hoc policies to manage these populations.

From the perspective of both types of migration, Malaysia and Thailand offer intriguing contrasts and enable the exploration of the interplay between labor, migration, and political, economic, and social incorporation, under diverse configurations. As the major economic hubs of their respective countries and with their thriving labor markets, **Kuala Lumpur** and **Bangkok** provide ample fieldwork opportunities to observe these phenomena within these two nations.

## Our main questions

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**TRIMSEA** intends to decipher the diversity of migrations in Southeast Asia, through the lens of various kinds of migration. It does so from an epistemologically, theoretically and methodologically informed perspective. In this context, it aims to trigger knowledge coproduction *between* and *with* scholars based in Southeast Asian and French universities. **What are the specificities of migrations in Southeast Asia? How do they speak to established bodies of knowledge on migration, globally?** We will carry out this reflection while being aware of the pitfalls of area studies, which suppose problematizing both the spatial inscription and the historicity of regional migrations.

## TRIMSEA 2023 thematic & methodological focus

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**TRIMSEA** involves research trips in **Bangkok** and **Kuala Lumpur**. It poses questions about **how to analyse migrations in Southeast Asia, and how these migrations can be compared to other global migration patterns**. This raises the broad issue of **contextualisation** and **comparison**, a common challenge for young scholars during their doctoral studies. What are the relevant contexts of observation? How do we define a research “site” in the context of migration studies? Should we opt for a **single site** or a **multi-sited research design**? If we choose a single site research design, how do we select a specific location? In the case of a multi-sited research configuration, how should we characterise the relationship between different sites? Finally, how do such de-structuring and re-structuring of the research field relate to the critical issue of **case comparison**, which underpins knowledge production in the social sciences?

Over the past decades, migration studies have evolved in their approach to these puzzles. Initial interest focused on immigration and integration processes, viewed as one-way movements observed from host countries. More recently, the field has shifted towards exploring transnationalism, characterised by multi-directional mobilities and reversible trajectories. These newer studies capture migration within broader, layered, more or less continuous space-time frameworks, including **digital spaces**.

## TRIMSEA 2023 activities

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A series of diverse and complementary activities will help the students engage with transnational migration studies from various thematic and disciplinary perspectives and better locate their theme and research objects within the field. A team of researchers will provide **lectures** that will examine the main theoretical and methodological orientations of migration studies, from a multidisciplinary perspective. Lectures will also present, past or ongoing works and research programs conducted by the researchers, who will reflect on their initial expectations, effective outputs, and their limitations. Researchers will also lead **workshops** that will help the students critically analyse a *corpus* of migration related scientific papers, reassess and re-think their research objects through the prism of migration studies, and (re)write their research proposal in the perspective of applying for grants and/or doctoral schools. Finally, **fieldwork activities** will rely on a comparative empirical approach between the cases of Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur and will include interactions with institutional partners (NGOs, international organizations).

## Where and when

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The TRIMSEA edition of IRASEC Winter School in Social Sciences and Humanities will be held between **27 November and 9 December 2023 in Bangkok (27 November - 2 December) and in Kuala Lumpur (4 – 9 December)**. The event will involve Southeast Asian and French teams of researchers, lecturers, practitioners and institutional actors.

## How to apply

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Three categories of candidates are eligible:

1. PhD students;
2. Students who hold a master degree and would like to enroll as PhD students;
3. Master students who would like to enroll as PhD students after completion of their master.

The application file shall be composed by:

- cover letter outlining the student's motivations to attend the TRIMSEA Winter School;
- updated curriculum vitae;
- research project (between 700 and 1000 words) that the applicant develops / may want to develop during his/her doctoral studies;
- names and email addresses of 2 referees;
- copy of master degree or academic transcript (in case the applicant does not yet hold his/her master degree at the time of the application).
- In case you wish to apply for a fellowship: a written statement (email will be acceptable) certifying that you are not receiving any other form of funding to attend TRIMSEA winter school.

The application shall be sent to the following email address: [winterschool2023@irasec.com](mailto:winterschool2023@irasec.com)

Candidates shall submit their application at the latest on **September 15th 2023**. Successful applicants will be notified on September 30th 2023.



## Fellowships (travel & accommodation)

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Limited funding is available to sponsor **international travel** and **accommodation** (double bedrooms or apartments) costs for students coming from low-income countries.

## Registration fees

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All successful applicants will have to pay a registration fee equivalent to **100 Euros**.

## If you have any questions...

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Do not hesitate to reach out to the scientific coordinators—**Loïs Bastide** and **Jérôme Samuel**—if you have any questions: [winterschool2023@irasec.com](mailto:winterschool2023@irasec.com).

## Lecturers & members of the scientific committee

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**Dr. Peter Aning**, Senior lecturer, University of Malaya, Malaysia  
**Dr. Loïs Bastide**, Statutory researcher IRASEC, Visiting senior research fellow ARI-NUS  
**Dr. William Berthomière**, Senior researcher, CNRS, France  
**Dr. Supang Chantanavich**, Professor, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
**Dr. Herbary Cheung**, Lecturer Monash University, Malaysia  
**Dr. Bhanubhatra Jittiang**, Ass. Professor, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
**Dr. Jiraporn Laocharoenwong**, Lecturer, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
**Dr. Jérôme Samuel**, director of IRASEC, Bangkok  
**Dr. Nareumon Thabchumpon**, Ass. Professor, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
**Dr. Sirima Thongsawang**, Ass. Professor, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
**Dr. Riwanto Tirtosudarno**, Emeritus researcher BRIN, Indonesia

And others:  
academics, members of NGOs  
and international organisations (IOM, ICRC...).

