

Editorial

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ASEAS 12(1) features a thematically open issue on recent developments in Southeast Asia, ranging from qualitative case studies to wider socio-economic, political, and cultural dynamics in the region. The articles cover developments in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia, but the analyses transcend national borders and also discuss, for example, the rising influence of China in Southeast Asia.

Dealing with historical events that shape current societies, Hakimul Ikhwan, Vissia Ita Yulianto, and Gilang Desti Parahita (Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia) focus on the 1965 anticommunist killings in Indonesia. They discuss the role of new media, especially YouTube, in confronting the dominant narrative of the events happening in the aftermath of September 1965. Centering their qualitative research – combining both online and offline sources – in memory studies, the authors find that the burgeoning counter narratives do not echo the confrontational and propagandistic tone of the dominant narrative but provide nuanced and diverse forms of expression that keep the memories of the victims alive and may contribute to national healing.

Following up on the previous issue on forced migration (Stange & Sakdapolrak, 2018), two articles in this issue provide detailed case studies on different types of migration in Southeast Asia. Prasert Rangkla (Thammasat University, Thailand) explores the experiences of Burmese migrants returning from Thailand and seeking a better life in recently transitioning Myanmar. He argues that the process of returning, rather than a straight forward, linear process, is shaped by friction and traction, supporting as well as impeding the plans of returnees. Janina Puder (Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany) focuses on labor migration from Indonesia to Malaysia's oil palm plantations. In a qualitative case study, she analyses the implications of Malaysia's alleged shift towards a bioeconomy on the migrant plantation workers in Sabah, East Malaysia. She specifically reflects on the living and working conditions of low-skilled migrant workers that make their prospects of inclusion into the upward mobility target of the bioeconomy program highly unlikely.

In another qualitative case study, Dodi Widiyanto (Nagoya University, Japan & Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia) analyses the phenomenon of farmers' markets in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Apart from traditional and modern markets, he identifies them as a third wave of food markets in Indonesia and focuses especially on the meanings of local and healthy food. Interestingly, Widiyanto shows that local food is not necessarily associated with geographical proximity, that is, being grown in Yogyakarta or the surrounding province, but also with social

relations and values that are negotiated between vendors and consumers.

In line with a previous focus on the political economy of new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia (Einzenberger & Schaffar, 2018), David J. H. Blake (University of York, United Kingdom) discusses the shift towards stricter authoritarianism in Cambodia over the recent years. In an interesting argument, he borrows the concept of a “hydraulic society” from Karl August Wittfogel to analyze the interlinkages between infrastructure projects and authoritarian rule under Hun Sen. Blake emphasizes the growing influence of Chinese investment in hydropower infrastructure and the expansion of authority under Hun Sen as a satellite hydraulic state of China. Also dealing with the rising influence of China in Southeast Asia, Jacob Hrubý and Tomáš Petrů (Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic) investigate China’s cultural diplomacy in Malaysia during the premiership of Najib Razak from 2015 to 2018. Their article shows an intricate pattern of networks, involving various actors, both Chinese and Malaysian, state, semi-state, and non-state, whose interests converge and overlap with the aims of Chinese cultural diplomacy.

Focusing on economic and financial trends in the region, Hong-Kong T. Nguyen (Phu Xuan University, Vietnam), Viet-Ha T. Nguyen, Thu-Trang Vuong, Manh-Tung Ho, and Quan-Hoang Vuong (Phenikaa University Hanoi, Vietnam) present a review on the rising indebtedness of the emerging economy of Vietnam, with a special focus on household debt and non-financial corporations. Although traditionally a culture condemning debts, the authors provide data that shows the increasing levels of debt that also point to the relevance of consumerism and an emerging middle class.

Finally, Ralph Chan (University of Vienna) and Joshua Makalintal (University of Innsbruck) contribute a review of the German-language *Handbuch Philippinen* for an international community. Rainer Werning and Jörg Schwieger co-edited the compilation in its 6th edition this year with a focus on Duterte’s populist authoritarian turn.



REFERENCES

- Einzenberger, R., & Schaffar, W. (2018). The political economy of new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, *11*(1), 1-12.
- Stange, G., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2018). Forced migration in Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, *11*(2), 161-164.