

**Research on South-East Asia in Austria:
Department of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna**

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Asia has witnessed dynamic economic, demographic, and social transformations during the last few decades. Especially India and several countries in East and South-East Asia have already become important global players, while only a few decades ago most of them were considered to be backward and dominated by agriculture. Increasingly complex economic interrelationships between the more developed countries and the so-called Asian newly industrialised countries (NICs), as well as the soaring attractiveness of developing (mass) tourism destinations, have led to a growing demand for regional experts, for example as consultants on economic matters, politics, international development co-operation, tourism, or mass media. For these reasons, at the Department of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna³, we offer the possibility of specialising in 'development studies/development co-operation' within the 'Master of Geography/Regional Research' curriculum. We provide a regional focus on Asia, especially South-East Asia.

Geographical research on Asia at the University of Vienna started about one hundred years ago. Until the 1970s, however, geographical studies mainly focused on the Middle and the Near East. Starting at the beginning of the 1980s, the Department

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shifted its research and teaching focus towards East and South-East Asia. At that time, Asia's economic boom aroused worldwide attention. So did its economic bust in the late 1990s. In this context, issues of spatial and social inequalities came into focus. Moreover, the region has been experiencing rapid changes in the context of demographic development, urbanisation, internal and international migration, tourism development, and economic-agrarian development.

The Department's curriculum is designed to strengthen knowledge and understanding of this dynamic region using social science approaches and qualitative and quantitative research methods. Biannually, the Department organises, in co-operation with our partner universities in South-East Asia, a field excursion where students apply a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches on location.

Current Research Interests and Teaching Activities

Within the scope of the research clusters 'Demographic and Socioeconomic Transformations' and 'Megacities, Globalisation, and Migration', dynamic processes of demographic, economic, social, cultural, and political transformations in South-East Asia are discussed and analysed.

The study of structures and movements of populations has been a core element of human geographical research. When the department launched its regional focus on South-East Asia in the 1970s, governments and international organisations alike considered the 'baby boom', with its high fertility rates causing rapid population growth, to be the main dilemma of population development. Today we can demonstrate that birth rates have dropped and dramatic changes in population age structure are putting great pressure on the countries of South-East Asia. Another phenomenon that influences population structures is the ongoing development of internal and international migration, whose causes, processes, and dynamics are still insufficiently documented. In this context, the department principally focuses its research on transnational labour migration, rural-urban interactions, ethnic entrepreneurship, and 'Third World' megacities. A leisure-orientated form of mobility is tourism. Despite a series of shocks (e.g. political crises, tsunamis), South-East Asia has experienced impressive growth in both international and domestic tourism. A complex travel industry offering various forms of tourism – ranging from SSS

(‘sun, sea, sex’), cultural, ethnic, and nature tourism to urban, health, and retiree tourism – has emerged. Current research projects of the department analyse host perspectives and power relations at various travel destinations, and study the causes and impacts of ‘amenity migration’ and second home development. Modernisation and globalisation have brought benefits to parts of society; simultaneously, however, regional disparities and social inequalities between mainstream society and minority groups are increasing.

Demographic and socioeconomic transformation processes

- Spatial disparities and social inequality
- Fertility decline, demographic ageing, and their consequences
- ‘Searching for Paradise’: European ‘amenity migration’ and second home development in South-East Asia
- Ethnic tourism: Uncovering intercultural encounters in destination communities
- Dynamics and impact of mass tourism; new forms of sustainable travel

Megacities, Globalisation, and Migration

- International migration in South-East and East Asia: Dynamics, structure, and changing patterns
- Rethinking rural-urban migration: Changing impacts on city and countryside?
- ‘Third World’ megacities: Development, globalisation, and migration
- The role of NGOs and CBOs (community-based organisations) in new forms of urban governance in megacities
- Low-cost housing in Asian megacities: Participatory approaches and their effectiveness.

Selected Publications of the Department Staff

Feldbauer, P., Husa, K., & Korff, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Südostasien: Gesellschaft, Räume und Entwicklung im 20. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: Promedia.

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Husa, K., & Wohlschlägl, H. (1997). „Booming Bangkok“: Eine Megastadt in Südostasien im Spannungsfeld von Metropolisierung und Globalisierung. In P. Feldbauer, K. Husa, E. Pilz, & I. Stacher (Eds.), *Mega-Cities. Die Metropolen des Südens zwischen Globalisierung und Fragmentierung* (pp.113-150). Frankfurt am Main, Germany & Vienna: Brandes & Apsel, Südwind.

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Husa, K., & Wohlschlägl, H. (2002). Southeast Asia: A New Global Player in the System of International Labour Migration. *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde (Englische Sondernummer 2002: International Migration – Problems, Prospects, Policies)*, 16-28.

Husa, K., & Wohlschlägl, H. (2007). Globale Märkte – lokale Konsequenzen: Arbeitsmigration in Südostasien seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts. In K. Husa, A. Kraler, V. Bilger, & I. Stacher (Eds.), *Migrationen. Globale Entwicklungen seit 1850* (pp. 171-198). Vienna: Mandelbaum.

Husa, K., & Wohlschlägl, H. (2008). From “Baby Boom” to “Grey Boom”? Southeast Asia’s Demographic Transformation and its Consequences. *Geographische Rundschau – International Edition*, 4(1), 20-27.

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Spreitzhofer, G. (2003). From Farming to Franchising: Current Aspects of Transformation in post-crisis Metro-Jakarta. *Asien*, 87(3), 52-64.

Spreitzhofer, G. (2008). Zwischen Khao San und Lonely Planet. Aspekte der postmodernen Backpacking-Identität in Südostasien. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 1(2), 140-161.

Trupp, A., & Butratana, K. (2009). Images of Hans Manndorff’s Anthropological Research on the ‘Hill Tribes’ of Northern Thailand. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 2(2), 153-161.

Trupp, A., & Trupp, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Ethnotourismus. Interkulturelle Begegnung auf Augenhöhe?* Vienna: Mandelbaum.