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“GOVERNING WITH A HEAD BUT NO ARMS AND LEGS”: INTER-DEPENDENCY, CO-OPTION AND OPPOSITIONAL MIGRATION POLITICS

Speaker

Dr. Sverre Molland,
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Date

Monday 18 May
3:00 - 4:00 pm

Location

ONLINE Free and open to all.
Please register via contact email
to obtain Zoom link

ANU College of
Arts & Social
Sciences
School of Archaeology and
Anthropology

Safe migration has emerged as a central policy discourse in the Mekong region and elsewhere. Although United Nations agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations dominate this policy space, governments, as well as informal migrant self-help groups, are central in enabling safe migration service delivery. Based on fieldwork in the Mekong region, this paper explicates how local migrant self-help groups and government bodies engage one another through migrant assistance (e.g. work permit processing, worker compensation claims, action against unscrupulous brokers). The paper explicates how these relationships comprise forms of interdependency but at the same time institutes an oppositional politics. Whereas migrant groups accuse government bodies of siding with employers, government bodies perceive migrant groups as unruly pseudo-unions. Yet, both depend on each other in various ways in order to enable each other's operational space. Whereas migrant self-help groups depend on close relations with state authorities (in order to provide them

with legal cover to operate), state bodies (“heads”) depend on migrant groups (“arms and legs”) in order to connect with migrant communities. The paper considers some of the implications this has for how migrant assistance, under the auspices of safe migration aid delivery, unfolds through assemblages of state and non-state actors, as well as the wider consequences this has for emergent safe migration policy interventions.

Speaker

Dr. Molland's research examines the intersections between migration, development and security in a comparative perspective, with specific focus on governance regimes and intervention modalities in mainland Southeast Asia. He has published widely on human trafficking and migration governance in the Mekong region.

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