

Roundtable on Reshaping Southeast Asian Studies

IIAS-Mellon Foundation workshop
"Communities in Between: Redefining Social
Spaces in Southeast Asian Borderlands"
Lyon, 3-4 November 2014

What are the challenges?

- East and South Asian vectors of globalization seem to *enhance* the need for understanding the sources of investment, ideas, and people from Japan, China, India
- But globalization of Southeast Asia seems to *reduce* need for Southeast Asian studies...
- ... because the assumption is that globalization changes SEAsia rather than that SEAsia changes the world

Area studies and states

- "Area studies" are geographically bounded...
- ... just like nation-states
- Ulrich Beck: replace methodological nationalism (and individualism) with methodological cosmopolitanism in globalizing world
- We must question naturalization of nations, states, areas/regions by problematizing borders and boundaries...
- ... even as states operate as vehicles and contexts for markets and globalization

Possible lines of discussion

- Borderlands have usually been depicted as spaces of *despair* (compulsion); when and how did such spaces become spaces of *hope* (opportunity), and how do *hope* and *despair* articulate?
- Is the "agrarian transition" happening now different in scale or in nature from previous transformations?
- What are the effects of "centering the margins" on the (state-market-knowledge) centers themselves?
- What are the roles of intermediary ethnic and religious categories in bridging borders, classes?