Lecture Series of the Department of Development Studies

Masculinity for Sale: Shan Migrant Men Sex Workers in Thailand and Questions of Identity

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Chaired by Petra Dannecker (University of Vienna)

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Seminarraum SG1, Internationale Entwicklung, Sensengasse 3 Bauteil 1
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The portion of sex industry in Thailand involving same-gender sex between men has recently seen a shift to a predominantly migrant workforce, particularly in northern Thailand. The majority of men sex workers in Chiang Mai, a metropolitan center in northern Thailand, are Shan migrants from Myanmar. This research explores the lives of Shan men engaged in sex work in Chiang Mai, examining how engaging with queer sexual commodification shapes their gender and sexual identities. As Shan men sex workers in this research identify as heterosexual men, selling sex to men might impact their sense of (hetero)masculinity. Based on 20 in-depth interviews with Shan migrant men sex workers living and working in Chiang Mai city, this research explores, on the one hand, how Shan men sex workers negotiate, redefine, and reconstruct their masculinities, and on the other, how the identities of being a masculine man, sex worker, and non- citizen migrant intersect and shape their experiences and identities.