The Great China Circle: Changing Patterns of Industrial Labour Mobility under Territorial Concerted Agreements.

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Abstract

The purpose of this article has been to introduce labour issues of changing mobility patterns within China's greater circle in terms of multilateral legal frameworks and bilateral concerted agreements. This process has led to diversified interventions for industrial labour distribution with internal and external human mobility for labour. The articulation of legislative steps and national labour consultations has been discussed in the paper from a regional economic integration perspective to understand the positioning of countries about structural national adjustments in the Region. The substantial picture provided from increased trade relations with migrant workforces has been closely related to the direction of cooperation and coordination steps that have evolved within the complexity of East Asian trading networks

Keywords
Introduction

The intellectual discourse based on China’s modernizing factors of production has been developed in academic and governmental agencies as one of the aspects about a structural deployment of resources that provides enhanced opportunities in the urban areas as well as in the countryside. Despite a facilitation of government interventions to manage internal market forces of the state, it has been found unequal patterns of labour distribution from rural to urban environments.

The diffusion of development schemes has produced a type of diversified interventions in rural localities perpetuating cyclical village practices, which because of limited flow of business have also maintained internal/external human mobility for labour. The state’s labour migration schemes that have offered intended regulation measures to reintegrate migrants in the place of origin have not been responsive to migrants’ economic status within local administrations, and in host-countries (R. Murphy, 2002). In a retrospective view, East Asia and Southeast Asia have been both labour sending and receiving countries where its workforce has also been attracted by employment prospects in foreign states such as in Middle East states under temporary contracts\(^1\).

Instead a number of receiving countries like Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore have directly assisted to internal migration flows from Southeast Asia by deciding to provide for temporary labour opportunities offered e.g. in industries, or in the service, and trade sectors\(^2\). While China had a limited external migration in which a higher proportion of migrants was internally floating with an estimated number of 80 million to 150 million people (Maruja Asis, F. Baggio, 2008). This changing economy has internally achieved the upgrading of production factors with low-cost wages for workers that have been employed on a massive scale.

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\(^1\)UNESCAP: ESID/SIIM/12 report: “The recent trend of recruitment of temporary labour from South Asia could be traced back to the early 1970s in the wake of the labour intensive construction boom in the Middle East. The labour force of South Asia countries participated in the growing economy of the Middle East and the flow of labour migration reached 800,000 annually by mid 1990s.” (ESID/SIIM/12, report p. 8, 2005).

\(^2\)In the case of Hong Kong, less skilled workers have been admitted for construction and domestic jobs, while Japan and the Republic of Korea have implemented training policies that allow the entrance of skilled foreign workers to fill up labour shortages in SMEs. Similarly Taiwan, PRC offers migration policies that allow short-term entry for less-semi-skilled workers. (UNESCAP: The Asia-Pacific Migration System, 2001).
The analytical arguments introduced in this paper will discuss, in particular, about the legal framework that has been created to respond to changing economic conditions in China, and in neighbouring countries that have smaller economies. Countries involved have, in fact, a growing rate of migrant workers who occupy internal and external labour spaces under legal/illegal status that has been determining settlement policies addressed to them. The higher intensity of trading activities within China’s mainland internal markets has become a case study for the implementation of centralized legal measures that can regulate, in an equal way, the occupational conditions of workers whom with a migrant status have found vulnerable relations for safety welfare packages covering living risks internal to the country.

From a capacity building process about access to labour practices in supply chains, relative information that has been updated through labour chronicles about factory workers and their degree of satisfaction, has also included a vulnerability of living conditions which has essentially emerged in terms of legal disputes with local officials who have become accountable for the regional economic process (R. Appelbaum, 2006). Within a national labour perspective, the transition of newly industrialized countries to capitalized global markets has required a certain degree of exposure for cooperating behaviours, and for the intensification of legal measures fostering a regional integration in the Asia-Pacific area.

Fundamentally, this process about regionalization of commercialized trading spaces has taken multiple legal forms that can be mapped e.g. through ASEAN+3 forums where in this case China has signed Memorandum of Understandings on regional cooperation issues, and bilateral FTAs to advance trade negotiations among regional and international partners. These progressive efforts on tangible aspects of intraregional trade have, in particular, shown how “ASEAN-China trade has expanded fast with an average growth rate of 20% from 1990-2003. ASEAN-China trade totalled US $39.5 billion in the year 2000.

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1 In Asia labour migration systems have been less modified by government-to-government discussions. As highlighted “Except for government regulation of migration matters, recruitment is left largely in the hands of private recruitment agencies…and the protection of workers rests on contracts signed between workers and their employers” (Maruja Asia, 2005, P. 18).

2 About Global Sustainable Management and Labour Social issues: weekly articles referred to CSR in the Asia Pacific region have also been providing useful updated information on labour practices available at: http://www.csr-asia.com/

3 About Regional Interdependence for the expansion of regional trading networks, ASEAN-China have signed FTAs for the elimination of tariffs on agricultural products and for the provision of favourable reciprocal conditions on intraregional growth (From: MDGs in Asia Pacific: available at http://www.mdgasiapacific.org/).
ASEAN’s share in China’s foreign merchandise trade has been continuously on the rise during that period, increasing from 5.8% in 1991 to 8.3% in 2000. ASEAN then became China’s fifth biggest trading partner. Meanwhile, the share of China in ASEAN’s trade has grown from 2.1% in 1994 to 3.9% in 2000. China then became the sixth largest trade partner of ASEAN. [...] To sum it all up, the trade value between the ASEAN and China increased from US$ 59.6 billion in 2003 to US$171.1 billion in 2007, growing at an annual rate of 30%. The average growth in exports is 28% with imports at 32% during the same period” (UACT, 2007, P.6). In addition, the escalation of enabling agreement for preferential trade programs has included China and ASEAN parties to join comprehensive co-operation provisions for a respective implementation of institutional frameworks applicable within the regional economic bloc. As a result, this combination of bi-multilateral accords has been an essential component of cooperative intentions to increase the degree of reciprocal interaction in trade and human development. In which migration patterns, being internationally unbalanced due to regional economic disparities, have been increasing with a corresponding lack of available management mechanisms put in place for a coordinated regulation of human mobility for labour.6

This continuous flow of migrant forces has been brought up in bilateral multilateral agreements in the Asia-Pacific region in order to respond to social and security issues that have also been related to labour migration process. The (BLAs) bilateral labour agreements or the (BMAs) bilateral maritime agreements, and the (ATAs) anti-trafficking agreements have allowed bilateral arrangements that however do not necessarily bind the signatory countries for a constitutive legal application (S. P. Go, 2007). In this sense, the application of labour arrangements or bilateral agreements has been closely associated with the type of mechanisms which have already been predisposed for their implementation, where both sending and receiving states of migrant labour can together establish concrete action plans to regulate a legal flow of migrants that may accordingly be subjected to national legal frameworks, in terms of employment conditions.7

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6 In the case of irregular migration, the lack of cooperative mechanisms to regulate increasing trends of migration has determined the spread of States’ intervention done in unilateral terms, in particular, Asian countries have imposed sanctions against illegal immigration, and against flows of illegal labour migrants. (Abella, 2005).

7 For example, Asian least developed countries have recognized the positive impact of labour migration for development but at the same time have maintained the need for a more systematic approach on migration by implementing the protection of migrants’ rights; the constitution of safe conditions for women’s access to foreign employment; together with administrative and legal accords that can bring to a more reliable and efficient promotion of foreign labour. (UNESCAP: Asia-Pacific Meeting on International Migration and Development for Nepal).
In China’s case the ideological delivery of constitutional principles had particularly met with the international global networks production where the practice of exporting industries has generated reforming steps by enabling the employment of the rural masses to large-scale industrial complexes. The creation of new labour opportunities has also determined a liberal enforcement of economic strategies that have essentially reduced the level of protection which had been granted to domestic producers, and where a dual position on the global economy has put the country to constrained relations with urban/rural domestic actors (S. Breslin, 2009).

Essentially, from one side, low-cost wages in China have attracted export-based producers who have indirectly favoured the formation of labour forces with skilled functions able to meet the production levels of competing markets with international actors investing in Chinese industries. On the other, the socio-economic infrastructure that has been transforming the labour market and the supply of labourers internal to the country has also fostered a tendency for a dual political extension of approaches for rural and social development within urban areas that could fill the economic advances of a transformed region. Fundamentally the rapid export industrialization in China has been possible through the huge pool of rural workers who have migrated to factory districts on a short and long term periods.

What has changed due to international financial crisis has been this paradox of labour shortages in China, in recent years, despite an abundance of workers moving to the cities as migrants, because as pointed out the state has adopted “…the hukou system which allows the government to: a) control the geographical mobility of the domestic population and labor; and b) create a two-tiered citizenship, thereby almost completely excluding rural population and labor from state-provided social services…This hukou system, on top of the pre-existing abundance of rural labor, aggravates the already very weak power of labor and gives rise to a host of fundamental labor issues…” (K. Wing Chan, 2009).

As highlighted “The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) built its revolutionary movement from ideological support of the peasant and in recent years have seen worker rights surface as a major priority for the government, particularly at foreign enterprises. The 2008 Labour Contract Law was primarily designed to level the balance of power between employer and employee by significantly raising worker protections under contract. In part due to increased recognition of workers’ rights under the Labour Contract Law, officially reported labour disputes in China have dramatically risen – 280,000 labour complaints made it to the Chinese courts in 2008.” (Report APCO, 2010, p. 5).

About the experience of China internal migration, in particular, “In 2003, the so-called floating population, i.e. people who are not permanently registered in their current place of residence, reached 140 million, most of them rural labourers moving from the countryside to cities and coastal areas. For instance, as many as 114 million rural labourers participated in internal migration in 2003.” (Ping, and Shaohua, 2005, p.2).
Structural assessments about work opportunities in the cities reveal this type of social disparity between migrant workers moving from rural provinces whom due to the hukou system have not been able to integrate themselves as de jure citizens, where they stay as a labour force exploitable and easy to compromise with, (K. Wing Chan, 2010).\(^{10}\)

For these reasons, exclusion factors for low-cost labour have caused a reduced amount of sustainable institutional effort that can offer active responses in terms of health and welfare conditions, also meeting with the demands of industrial workers whom have been experiencing a lack of bargaining conditions in order to ameliorate living standards, and wages levels. Moreover, the potential pressures for the need of skilled labour have given rise to concerns about this relationship of a collectivist economy that creates little foundation for channelling the promotion and defence of workers’ interests\(^{12}\) and that of the employers seeking for qualified working forces at different levels.\(^{13}\)

In terms of industrial relations, decision policy makers have to include a public management of regulating frameworks that can allow development processes in which institutional systems and legal conducts can also follow the movement of individuals, socially organized for collective labour negotiations, and dialogues with national enterprises that have been traditionally arranged. The search for social compromises that enhances the flow of market forces and interventionist policies can also be established through many forms, related to the motives of governmental actors, employers, workers, and social representatives, whom can better specify the type of rules to prevent the exploitation of the labour force, and to improve the urban as well as countryside

\(^{10}\) With China’s migrant workers mobility, as stressed out “the enduring division between urban hukuo holders and temporary migrants, in terms of different life expectations, has demonstrated that rural migrants remain excluded from full participation in urban society in both living conditions and social welfare provisions. …Workers still suffer from a multitude of discrimination and blocked upward mobility in cities across China.” (Mao, Pih, and Bao, 2010, available at: http://www.chinacenter.net/China_Currents/Vol9_No2_2010/cc_mao.htm).

\(^{11}\) In population figures “By the end of 2005, the percentage of the population in urban areas reached 43% of the total population and the urban population was 562 million, that is, 390 million more than in 1978. In the same period, the number of cities increased from 223 to 660. From 1978 to 2004, the number of towns increased from 2,851 to 19, 171. It has been estimated that by 2020 the urban population will comprise 60% of the total population” (Li, and Piachaud, 2006, p.1).

\(^{12}\) As reported, “All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU)-affiliated unions are the only legal unions in China. Still, many workers see the ACFTU as ineffectual within their organizations or as too imbedded within the government to properly represent workers’ interests.” (Report APCO, 2010, p. 2).

\(^{13}\) Instead for employers, “By western standards Chinese labour is still incredibly cheap. Nonetheless, steadily rising wages will push companies to adopt alternative strategies like factory relocation to China’s interior or increases in automation. There will be pockets within China where low-cost labour will not be the viable option it once was.” (Report APCO, 2010, p. 2).
relationship in terms of human mobility (D. Macdonald, 1997). Again the paradox of China’s labour shortages has increased because of the fact that the mounting under-class of urban workers has been gradually unable to upgrade working qualifications, and in addition by “…using independent data sources …China’s urban unemployment rate increased from 7.7% in 1995 to 11.5% in 2000. Unemployment was widespread, hitting older workers, women and those with less education particularly hard…” (Tao Yang, Chen, Monarch, 2010, p. 10) The respective fragmentation of skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled workers in urban China has de facto limited wages’ increases and fostered regional inequalities on labour costs.14

Despite such discrepancies, Chinese industrial lead has formally been devoted to joint efforts for the development of e.g. electronics and information technology industries that “have been focused on the establishment of high tech industrial development zones that provide firms with first-rate infrastructure and a variety of preferential taxes and collective services” (A. Lee Saxenian, 2003, p. 6). But at the same time, this process has also caused uneven results in terms of coherent innovation systems and funding for R&D where “education remained low by international standards … and the weight of policy remained biased toward state-owned enterprises rather than the potentially more creative and innovative non-governmental technology enterprises.” (A. Lee Saxenian, 2003, p. 7). This type of promotion of governmental policies for the integration of industrial development has expanded in the last two decades but with preferential logics that have sustained a proliferation of international partnerships, and joint ventures with foreign companies (A. Lee Saxenian, 2003). Environmental experiences in the development of national industries globally competitive culminated with China’s accession into the WTO when it also recognized prevailing transparent regulations and international legal frameworks.15

14 About labour rate, “China’s official unemployment rate has remained at between two to five % for the last two decades, comparable to Hong Kong and Taiwan, and much lower than the rate in many European countries. However, it is critical to note that the official unemployment statistics only include urban residents who have registered as unemployed, and do not include rural labourers who have migrated to the cities in search of work or those left unemployed in the countryside. According to the State Statistical Bureau, unemployment only refers to urban residents who 1) posses non-agricultural residence card; 2) are within a certain age range (16 to retirement age); 3) are able and willing to work; 4) have registered with the local labour bureau for employment.” (China Labour Bulletin 2008: available at: http://www.china-labour.org.hk/en/node/100060).

15 China’s accession to the WTO in 2001 has internationally put pressure on the country also in areas that include a standardization to international labour rights formulated e.g. by (ILO). ILO conventions have formed a set of core labour standards which subscribe freedom of association and collective bargain, freedom from forced labour, equality of
Managing Labour for Social Change

With an increasing regional differentiation in the Asia-Pacific region, a direct transfer of knowledge for development and creation of new job opportunities has accordingly shaped transnational patterns of labour mobility and governing rules. Managing labour markets under flexible conditions has put migration as an alternative choice to the rigidities of national working units16 and hierarchical positions in which “…the Chinese communist government effectively put the carrots ‘on the move’ as part of its reform agenda of building a market economy, which in turn contributed to the increase in outmigration, the migrants now find themselves trapped in ‘free’ countries by policies that are more restrictive than those in Cultural Revolution era China” (Xiang Biao, 2008, p. 9). Essentially, to understand the international labour migration process and industrial relations in East Asia (China) the shape taken by cooperation agreements involves the public and private sectors that have been administering multiple forms of labour incentives under ‘free markets’, which have undermined the social change of mobile workers within and across the region. Respectively, a formal prevalence of capitalist markets within sovereign states has been especially playing distinctive forms of labour contexts into which valuable labour forces have found themselves in between national productions and external networks for global production chains. As a result, levels of internal migration have particularly meant that Chinese and Asian neighbouring counterparts have increased a social tendency to remain in migrant spaces on a temporary or also on a permanent basis.

In essence, changing mobility patterns allow for a national or foreign residency in which labourers have extended social migration ties beyond territorial boundaries for their employment opportunity, gender equality, safe and health working conditions…etc… (Guo, 2003, available at: http://daltonstate.academia.edu/BaogangGuo/Papers/74184/Chinas_Labor_Standards_Myths_and_Realities).

16 In addition, “There are also tens of thousands of unskilled men amongst the migrants, many engaged in the construction boom of the last decades, but women were increasingly incorporated into the assembly industries, principally textiles, electronics and toys, that were established under the logic of an International division of labour. …The migrant populations in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 of the SEZs of Shenzen, adjacent to Hong Kong, of Zhuhai, adjacent to Macau, and the majority of townships in the Pearl River delta region were dominated by women. The structure of production is mainly through systems of subcontracting and outprocessing which maintains flexibility for the employer but little protection and few benefits to the workers…There are many other areas throughout the Asian and the Pacific region where patterns similar to those described for Southern China and Bangkok can be found” (R. Skeldon, 2003, p. 15. Available at: http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/Publication/DiscussionPapers/02/series2.pdf).
ability to integrate themselves into distinctive administrative contexts for job’s purposes.\(^{17}\) However, a problem with this increased social mobility for industrial, business, or service labour has also been an unreported flow of data collection because of a lack of systematized indicators that can capture this type of change, especially, during the last two decades (G. Hugo, 2006).\(^{18}\) In addition, overlapping population censuses and labour country figures have not fully reported the level of population change, or how much it has costed according to variable contexts. This means that internal/external migration patterns in the Asia-Pacific region have significantly increased in the proportion of labour mobility with inter-correlated factors that if provided with systemic chronological information may as well reveal the extent of migration characteristics, and demonstrate a social separation across involved institutional and productive dimensions.

For example, as previously mentioned, China’s case with the *Hukou* system has provided a differentiation of citizenship categories which may not be easy to capture, despite statistical population reports, that can also include the significance of unemployment factors, or the period of migration from rural to urban areas, or in industrial labour national schemes.\(^{19}\) The contribution for a constant economic transformation in China has been provided by the presence of broader institutional and financial frameworks that also pertain in turn to regional integration with regional partners\(^{20}\) that have required to address together common goals for the achievement of favourable labour market conditions. Accordingly, labour mobility between regional partners becomes also part of integration between states through bilateral agreements and memorandum of understandings representing a basis for instrumental cooperation in order to reach both mutual assurances and security issues that can involve e.g. the implementation of anti-trafficking agreements, as well as supporting mechanisms between

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\(^{17}\) On Social Migrant network, out flow migrants have strengthened ties with institutions e.g. universities, Diaspora organizations, government and NGOs, religious and cultural organizations, by expanding interpersonal relations for job opportunities in destination countries. (M.V. Poros, 2011, Available at: [http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=833](http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=833)).

\(^{18}\) At the Fourth World Conference on Women in 2003 it was emphasized a social gender dimension that demanded statistics and indicators also on gender issues in order to improve policy formulations and monitoring aspects of a targeted development. (ESCAP, 2003: Available at: [http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/Publication/Gender-Indicators.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/Publication/Gender-Indicators.pdf)).

\(^{19}\) In recent years, as effective changes in China it has been highlighted the increase of urban wages compared to rural wages with resulting effects on temporary migration which has also favoured an illegal presence especially in coastal cities. (Bosker, Brakman, Garretsen and Schramm, 2010).

\(^{20}\) In 2009, ASEAN together with trading partners: China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand have been committed to pursue economic relations through the (EAFTA) East Asia Free Trade Agreement and the (CEPEA) Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia within a period of 15 years. (Jian Zhang, 2010).
labour-sending countries (e.g. Philippines and Indonesia, the Mekong sub region, and Thailand with neighbours), (P. Wickramasekara, 2006). Similarly, receiving countries have also expressed a promotion of regulative aspects of informal migration with employers and industrial sectors that operate in labour markets at a regional/domestic level, (P. Wickramasekara, 2006).21

Asia’s Jobs under Uncertainty

Common areas of uncertainty have been the nature of significant shifts in global productions through which export-oriented industrialization also requires a development strategy close to locations and factories that are familiar with local decision-makers for a transformed implementation of international investors.22 The core-peripheral industrial plants in China and in the Region have become specialized agglomerations with a present workforce coming from internal and external areas where foreign investors Multinational Corporations (MNCs) become embedded actors in these host countries.23

From a macro-economic perspective, the increase of world production in regional networks has meant a managerial fragmentation that has involved structural adjustments of newly developed economies (e.g. Indonesia and Vietnam) accounting for specialized categories of commodities and services. As an example, it has been highlighted “In developing East Asia, all countries covered... have recorded increases in world market shares, with the ASEAN countries exhibiting faster increases compared to the regional

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21 Broadly “Asian migration has become increasingly intra-regional phenomenon. In mid-2000, a quarter of the 25 million international migrants worked in East and Southeast Asia – and their number increases to 7.5 million if unauthorized workers are included. (World Migration 2008 report: Regional Overviews, p. 439).

22 For the actual promotion of foreign-funded projects it has been pointed out how “China’s previous unresponsive labour market and the inefficient labour-management relations policies put heavy constrains on her pace to integrate into the global economy. Facing the quickly increased number of people being employed by foreign corporations in China, the Chinese government has been adjusting policies to accommodate the tension brought by the shifting pattern of employment relation from a single and predictable model fitting the centrally planned economy to a more diverse and complex pattern fitting the market driven economy.” (Yanjing Wang, 1999, p. 1. Available at: http://frank.mtsu.edu/~jee/pdf/yajing99.pdf)

23 As reported “Multinational corporations in China, such as Nike, Disney and Reebok have been closely monitored for workplace conditions and treatment of workers...Research by two Hong Kong based human rights groups...exposed the sweatshop conditions of Nike and Reebok subcontractors and the malpractice of the subcontractors toward local labourers...It was reported that workers were being forced to pay deposit before their commencement of work and they were forced to work eleven hours a day and received wages below minimum wage level stipulated by law. They were not aware of the dangerous chemicals in their working environment and were not even provided with protective clothing. They could be dismissed without any cause, and children between 13-15 were being employed.” (Yanjing Wang, 1999, p. 3. Available at: http://frank.mtsu.edu/~jee/pdf/yajing99.pdf)
average. Interestingly, the significant increase in the relative importance of developing East Asia in fragmentation trade has taken place against the backdrop of a notable decline in the shares of NAFTA and EU.” (P. C. Athukorala, 2008, p.489). The dependence of ASEAN countries has shown patterns of internal/external mobility toward a regional economic integration that involves China’s giant economy as well. In ILO 2006 report confirms cross-border movements of people in search of job opportunities outside the country of origin where 2.6 to 2.9 million workers in Asia have left their places and gone abroad.24 More specifically, the intra-regional mobility of workers has also been reflected by the condition that over one million new migrants have moved for Japan, Taiwan (China), the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia25 which basically included a skilled migrant labour force that could receive benefiting access conditions, especially when compared to unskilled workers/irregulars, whom instead have to go through informal work arrangements that have easily been causing exploitation and vulnerable conditions (ILO, 2006).

These so-defined working poor composed a total amount of 1.71 billion in 2005 of workers in Asia and the Pacific, and over 1 billion receives limited support to sustain their working living lifestyles and their families back home (ILO, 2006). As seen before, the bargaining power of migrant workers has been diminishing due to the presence of multiple stakeholders that have been focused on competitive production markets in low-cost infrastructures with industrial relations constrained in terms of collective agreements and collective action networks in Asia and the Pacific.

A progressive establishment of governance toward reforming steps in China but also in ASEAN countries has been addressed for the development of synchronized working standards, and qualitative work relations leading to an improvement of productivity within a globalizing sphere of multilateral interests of a world economy, which still remains critical in terms of implementation methods, together with coping

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24 In the case of ASEAN members the (AFAS) ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services has promoted temporary labour migration in the service, trade, and investment sectors, in order to convey a common regional understanding legally agreed about the acceleration of common regional economic goals envisioned by the ASEAN community. (A. Kaur, 2007).

25 Malaysia represents one of the largest receiving countries of migrant labour across Southeast Asia. In official figures migrant workers from all over Asia have amounted to about 2.8 million of the 12 million labour forces. In legal terms, Malaysia has defined two specific categories of migrants: documented/legal migrants and the undocumented/illegal migrants. Regulations adopted by the country include legislative labour instruments such as the Immigration Act, the Employment Act 1955/1998 and the Penal Code applied for foreign labour contracts. (A. Kaur, 2007).
mechanisms managed both by developed and developing national counterparts. This means that more and more investments factors alone will not systematically satisfy groups of nations by having moderate effects on working experiences done in changing workplaces that have been rapidly subjected to liberal development strategies.

In effect, collective movements for labour have been favoured to fill labour shortages in industrial manufacturing, plantations, fishing, milling jobs, among others from sending to receiving countries with increasing transaction costs in terms of informal/absent regulations. On the other hand, from unresponsive institutional assets on migrant labour conditions, it has been outlined another central aspect about “The growth and expansion of migrants’ networks and transnational connections...this is an example of ‘globalization from below’ of people harnessing resources to promote their interests. Migrants’ networks are an important source of support for migrants, enabling them to tap resources and to draw some social support in the countries of destination. In the absence of efforts to integrate migrants, social networks provide the possibility to have a community life in an otherwise hostile environment” (M. Asis, 2004, p. 24). Respectively, a higher degree of intensity of connection measures among social migrant networks that can favour a public participation in social and political life has also been difficult to capture through country-based empirical evidence due to a number of unauthorized migrants, and a variability of visits for different periods in host countries. In order to keep the international labour migration in the regional Asian experience, we can consider that bilateral and common multilateral agreements on labour may reflect official intentions that do not necessarily translate into policy directives for respective national

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26 For the case of Indonesian labour migrants the office for int. migration (IOM) reports that main problems depend on a lack of cooperation between government agencies to monitor national legislations which have not yet explicitly defined the equal share of responsibilities at the level of ministerial agents creating in Indonesia a power struggle between the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration and the National Authority for the Placement and Protection of Indonesia Overseas Workers. Moreover, Law No. 39/2004 limits the interference of Indonesian government in the migration process which has relied instead on private recruitment agencies to deploy labour migrants by providing trainings, documentation, and a foreign workplace. However, problems with unmonitored labour migration process have been created e.g. by the high cost of recruitment fees where Indonesian migrants placed e.g. in Hong Kong SAR for labour have advanced significant amounts of entry fees to cover the agencies costs. (IOM Indonesia, 2010).

27 Specifically, “Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin...Migrant networks can reduce information costs by providing specific job information to potential migrants, reduce psychological costs by providing supportive relationship to migrants in destinations, and reduce the probability of unemployment by providing direct job search assistance from fellow villagers...An important channel through which migrant networks facilitate out-migration is circular migration. Circular migration is the dominant form of labour migration in China.” (Yaohui Zhao, 2003, p. 500).
administrations. When we go through MoUs28 article by article it is clear that mutual intention on industrial relations might require, for instance, additional concerted activities29 to run consultation sessions on an annual basis, with national representatives engaging to the needs of public agendas, and liaison bodies that can better function for structural implementation purposes (MOU China - EU 2009). However, this type of softer legislation has not been legally binding.30 Therefore the expressed intentions promulgated across two or more countries do not formally engage the negotiating sides. It happens as a form of dialogue and consultation mechanisms that relates to current issues about country legislations and measures, for e.g. the industrial sectors mainly for enhancing cooperation attitudes and development promotion among trading partners. 31 So for the future protection of mutual interests, formal institutional arrangements taken up through international accords might change in scopes and initiatives also depending on applicable laws and regulations that can apply to each involved country. In addition to this, however communication mechanisms established in due course of diplomatic interactions can also be withdrawn unilaterally at any moment, and therefore will not remain necessarily in force for long term provisions.

Despite such regulated recognition process also addressing employment conditions and labour policies in international/bilateral-multilateral agreements, including accords about decent working hours, labour inspections etc… it still is a free channel of national manifestation for cooperation patterns. Which at initial stages presupposes the reciprocity of intentions and it follows through formal mandates to open more consultation phases for implementation mechanisms established under a mutual recognition between

28 The improvement of industrial relations in Asian countries has directly involved signatory parties that represent workers and employers, for instance in the Garment Industry, to commit to shared principles and to give their adherence through a common understanding expressed in MoUs. (MoU Cambodia, 2010: available at: http://www.betterfactories.org/content/documents/Cambodia%20Garment%20Industry%20MoU_signed.pdf).

29 As titled in this article, we refer to Concerted Agreements as “Concerted activity as action taken in pursuit of a common goal by multiple employees or by a single employee where the employee is authorized by other employees to act on their behalf…Employees have the right to engage in concerted activities even where no union activity is involved and in situations where the employees have not considered collective bargaining agreement.” (Hunton, and Williams, 2010. Available at: http://www.huntonlaborblog.com/tags/concerted-activity/).

30 Memorandums of Understandings in public international law refer to the signatory treaties coming into force without necessarily binding the involved parties. As underlined “The entering into the MOU does not constitute a legally binding commitment on the part of the parties to the MOU in respect of the Possible Transactions as the legally binding commitment is still subject to the execution of the Formal Agreement by the relevant parties.” (Wai Chun Company, 2010. Available at: http://www.0660.hk/eng/statutory/E%20660%20MOU%20(Final).pdf).

31 On cooperation in the field of intellectual property rights ASEAN and People’s Republic of China at the 15th Summit in 2009 have reached common understandings about intellectual property rights that have been put in the form of MoU treaties under respective national laws and regulations. See: http://www.aseansec.org/15thsummit/Mou-China-IP-Eng.pdf
authorized parties. Again the authenticity of such formal declarations in time and space will tend to diverge, also depending on specific labour programs, and felt labour requirements at domestic level. Moreover the cultural body of social texture that forms a national orientation of leaderships for development clearly reveals defined elements as in China’s case that cannot be denied in terms of negotiation process, and expected productive outcomes. The difficulty of China’s internal migration has been the de jure status of rural migrants within the hukou systems that classifies them as temporary migrants, in figures the below table 1 reports UN data on aggregated statistics. At the same time, regional migration patterns have impacted on particular countries and in specific areas driven in an increasing mobility within Asian communities (Graeme Hugo, 2005). Fundamentally, a possible comparison of labour migration conducted by transnational movements of people both internally and externally tells an original tale of workers with low skilled opportunities that entered the labour markets through temporary labour contracts for a limited duration of time. Another aspects still relates to the fact that the selection and placement of workers between countries has been done through legal agreements for cooperation on migration issues. Nonetheless, despite recruitment policies and developed legislations, private networks of recruiting agents continue to operate across labour systems under profit for profit management initiatives (M. Abella, 2005). More issues on Asia-Pacific regional labour information systems will be introduced in the following section of this paper.

32 In retrospective about the China’s Hukou system (household registration), “Beginning in last 1980s, many city governments began charging high fees in Exchange for hukou in towns and cities. City governments justified this practice on the grounds that they should be compensated for extending urban benefits to migrants. In mid-1990s, large cities, such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, began to offer ‘blue-stamp’ hukou to migrants who met high skill requirements and were able to make sizable investments… These practices commodified hukou and channelled resources from very small elite of eligible migrants to the coffers of urban governments…In 2003, the State Council issued a directive affirming the rights of rural migrants to work in cities. Adherence to these guidelines and directives is up to individual city governments” (C. Fan, 2004, p.67).
Table 1: Source: UN Population Division, 2008, p.5 (UN/POP/EGM-URB/2008/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic boundary (to cross)</th>
<th>City, Town, or Township</th>
<th>Township, Town, or Street</th>
<th>County, or City</th>
<th>Generally, township</th>
<th>Township</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum length of stay</td>
<td>No minimum</td>
<td>Usually average</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>6 months or one year</td>
<td>Regularly engaged in work outside townships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>6.6 (1 yr)</td>
<td>15.2 (6 months)</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>19.69</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>70.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>19.92</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>29.1** (6 months)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>19.24</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>63.7</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
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<td>144.4</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>59.8</td>
<td>108.0</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>17.13</td>
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<td>105.9</td>
<td>52.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16.87</td>
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<td>103.0</td>
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<td>69.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>19.08</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>153.1</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>17.01</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>121.6</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * the geographic boundary is based on city, county or town.
** the geographic boundary is based on county- level units.

How regional economic integration coped with labour sector challenges?

The location of East Asian industrial capacities has progressively been integrated with transitional economies which have acquired technology investments through ex. FDI during the last two decades. This production shift has interested, in particular, South Asian countries, and Mainland China for the intensity of capital flows, and the migration for industrial labour that facilitated the export process and an alternance of improved industrial assets. What has been known as East Asia’s industrialization with significant levels of technology diffusion has rapidly expanded towards less advanced nations that...

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33 It has been reported on China’s International Trade “In 2008, overall volume of China’s processing trade accounted for 41.1% of its international trade, with volume of export by processing trade accounting for 47.3% of overall export volume. China’s trade surplus in terms of processing trade was 296.78 billion USD, which basically was equal to China’s overall trade surplus. FDI enterprises’ export by processing trade was 572.195 billion USD, accounting for 72.37% of FDI enterprises’ overall export. Processing trade essentially is an effective combination of international capital and China’s cheap labour cost.” (Zhang Yansheng, UNESCAP, available at: http://www.unescap.org/tid/artnet/mtp/tf_sme_yzhang.pdf)
followed international production trends within structural national adjustments that have differed among regional counterparts (Gaulier, Lemoine, Kesenci, 2004). Fundamentally, the positioning of newly industrial actors in East and South Asia has been elaborated through different stages that have dissimilar characteristics compared with other developed states such as Japan, because of the fact of initiating industrial technology and manufacturing productions without a necessary experience coming from independent development. As a point in time, due to the spread of localized firms involved with global value-chains, a Chinese scholar (Zhang Yu), has also highlighted some major obstacles about the River Delta’s System Integration,\(^\text{34}\) that have emerged for a lack of coordination among local and regional interests. For this case, the integration of the Yangtze Delta region has been slowed down with differential impacts e.g. on labour movements, also depending on competition levels between local governments with the central authorities that have reformed the area (Zhang, Yu, 2010). Moreover, structural disparities have also developed because of a regional industrial division in River Delta that has multiplied itself in the same manner (isomorphism) by allowing people to compete only in same industries for restricted capacities that have been offered without a corresponding institutional coordination (Zhang Yu, 2010).\(^\text{35}\)

In essence, an incremental relationship created between political leaderships in Asia and working conditions of a deployable labour force has dramatically changed previous paths about market-oriented liberal transition within local economies that require more attention, and normative frameworks regulating capital, resources, and protection levels for labour in a coordinated process. Unprotected pockets of employment in administrative, local urban industrial districts have been established with flexible

\(^{34}\) Effectively, the Yangtze Delta region with Shanghai has established an important export-oriented economy that has grown also in recent years. The gross import and export volume of the Yangtze River Delta reached US$ 83.03 billion in competition with the Pearl River Delta with a gross import and export volume at US$ 69.28 billion in 2003. For the levels of competition between Shanghai and the rest of the Yangtze River basin, provincial leaders created a regional forum for economic coordination. At the same time, it has been initiated a regional integration with a Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Cooperation that envisions a common regional economic system that includes the 9 provinces of Fujian, Jiangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hunan, Guangdong, Hainan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and Hong Kong and Macao as special administrative regions. Close cooperation areas involve industry and investment, commerce and trade, labour and manpower, information technology. (Available at: http://www.klakogroup.com/en/china-invest-monthly-newsletter/chinas-pearl-river-delta)

\(^{35}\) In coastal China, there is a combination of new development with core—periphery uneven process because of the agglomeration of production under globalizing forces that have been centralizing resources and development, with a convergence of policies developed in local states. In which, traditional industries have manifested industrial isomorphism as well as a dispersed spatial layout with inherited legacies for the Yangzi River Delta. (Y.D. Wei, C. Gu, 2010, available at: SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1560103).
conditions, and with the inclusion of migrant workers performing their activities e.g. in the automobile and electronic sectors. According to the information about international capitalization of markets, it comes as no surprise that world regions have adopted variant modes of adaptation to competitive environments for production and socio-economic development. There are dominant patterns of international firms that maintain monopolistic – competitive conditions across societies, which allow for differentiated productions offshore, cross-borders, MNCs that become also responsible for running industrial components across territories (Ziaul Hoq, Amin, Chowdhury, & Ali, 2009). In a way, this can be interpreted according to the fact that newly developed countries such as China and India have also acquired international markets capabilities but with deeper changing implications about the effective operationalization of production plants, as well as labour schemes addressed to a national/local workforce. In terms of employability elements in China but also in India, there are territorial boundaries that have been merging for the concretization of international/regional trades, possibly sustained through the formation of active alliances e.g. ASEAN, APEC, ARF, that have envisioned a ‘free’ flow of capital and labour. However, the social costs of mobility factors for employable workforces have been determined by an approximation of regional but also of national/local strategies that when combined together could not realistically capture the intensity of fragmented social approaches towards dimensional aspects of mobile labour

36 National allocation schemes for wages have also been adopted in East Asia by the Republic of Korea that has promoted an unemployment insurance scheme since 1995. This workers’ protection scheme expanded in 1998 to include also firms with less than 5 employees, contracted either as temporary workers and daily workers, for the payment of job benefits. While Malaysia and Thailand have changed their severance pay schemes to increase up to 10 months the severance pay coverage, at the same time created a fund to remunerate those workers employed by firms that had to close down activities because of insolvency issues. (J. Unni, U. Rani, 2003. ESCAP. Available at: www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/summerschool).

37 In China’s world market factories wages in suppliers’ factories and services have been around 1,000 Yuan (circa 100 Euros) per month working hours ten to twelve hours a day. Minimum wages have been raised in recent years but enterprises do not implement such payments and in some cases an investigation done by China’s National Statistic Bureau has revealed that out of 30,000 workers asked; only 20% got some partial or delayed payments. In addition, workers in factory-constructions sites perform their working activities for more than 12 hours a day going overtime until late hours. (Libcom.org, available at: http://libcom.org/history/chinas-migrant-workers).

38 Specifically, South-East Asia, and the newly industrialized economies (NIEs) including China have benefited from export-based economic growth that has been based on labour-intensive production, and then gradually has also shifted to production and export of capital-intensive, high value-added goods and services. (UNESCAP/REC (8)/3, February 2001).

39 Nonetheless, economic impacts of China-ASEAN FTA have also had adverse effects in India when in 2010 the minister of commerce and industry Scindia highlighted a rising trade deficit with China with mounting concerns over tariffs reductions of goods exported by ASEAN countries to China with a consequent decline for exported goods of India. In fact, South Asian country, India has reached a trade deficit close to $22 billion with China because of the increase in flow of goods from Southeast Asia especially in very recent years. (Economic Time, 23 April 2010, available at: http://www.unescap.org/tid/tisnet/daily/daily230410.pdf).
forces. Because, in a way they still remain intertwined with cultural, economic, and political/legal factors that in turn have shaped working skills, modified capabilities, and enhanced better competencies, once that have been put into place. At the same time, an increasing relationship between industrial relations and national governments that has been present in development of trading systems leading to labour creation has also corresponded to a transformation of production phases that has led to a restructuring of national economic growths and societal change.\(^{40}\) Respectively, across Eastern borders in Asia, countries with higher rates of international labour migration have been either involved as emigration sites or instead as receiving sites for systemic offer of an available manpower predominantly low-skilled: the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Cambodia, Burma, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Indonesia as sending labour forces, while Republic of Korea, Japan, Taiwan (Province of China), Singapore, Hong Kong and Brunei as receiving working sites, with Malaysia and Thailand in both (Amarjit, Kaur, 2007).\(^{41}\) In such a type of diversified interregional development, what it is often emphasized has also been an emergence of changed migration patterns that could absorb more labour-intensive productions through higher level of skills, and with additional competencies that in effect could essentially support the scale of industrial production within countries for essential services’ requirements in terms of growth and welfare systems (Amarjit, Kaur, 2007). For this reason, the Asia and the Pacific region have converged to the expansion of human networks that have directly structured localized linkages with industries and international markets. A continuous involvement of structural knowledge networks can fundamentally be perceived under different angles, for instance, in South Asia’s case a number of external migrants have improved labour conditions in supporting external environments.\(^{42}\) However, despite a consolidation of

\(^{40}\) Clearly, globalizing processes in the economic, technological, social, and political spheres have dynamically integrated various overlapping dimensions that have spread in international trading exchange through the free movements of goods, persons, capital, and services across territories. Globalization has helped world trade to surge from 23% of world GDP in 1960 to 32.5% in 1991 and further to 41% in 2000 contributing to poverty reduction. (UNESCAP, 2001, available at: http://www.unescap.org/tid/publication/chap2_indpub2197.pdf).

\(^{41}\) In East and South-East Asian countries the adoption of an export-oriented strategy has favoured sustainable patterns of interregional commerce that has increased since the 1990s. In fact, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan regions, including South Korea have exported manufactured products, also leading on automobile and electronics productions. While in Southeast Asia exporting phases have seen an increase especially on primary products, such as palm oil, or derivatives.

\(^{42}\) Human migrant networks have been a crucial factor for the expansion of personal relations and its effect on economic conditions for the labourers in search of new remunerative opportunities. Indian immigrants have also been able to favour linkages with local markets outside their country of origin by expanding occupational ties in destination countries. More introspective analysis about sociological approaches to study networking migrant relations and supporting mechanisms also need a targeted attention for their prominence in everyday contacts with production
such migrant knowledge networks, transnational and regional protection’s labour bureaux, including labour agents/representatives, have also remained clustered around an inadequate performance and delivery status due to a lack of mobilisation, scant negotiating powers for protection procedures, together with inability to fulfil in a coherent manner a combination of services about labour information sharing, labour trainings, job’s advisory councils, especially when thinking about giving back appropriate responsive assets within Asian labour markets’ environment under changing distribution modes.

Putting in place coordinated labour provisions can be done in a decentralized manner in order to be able to recognize first priorities in local communities, and also for business investors that operate within assessed political schemes from the country of origin. This means that “local flexibility is emerging as a key action for fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and local cohesion in local economic development” (Martinez-Fernandez, & M. Powell, 2009, P. 4). An eventual mutation of migrant’s labour then becomes a reflection of both international cooperation and a regional enablement process put according to labour environments, which in turn can provide opportunities for skills acquisition and local settlement assistances through the integration of employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors. In addition, as mentioned, “The demographic population movements will increase especially in urban areas; between 2007 and 2015, the region’s urban population is expected to grow by 64.1 million (nearly 25%) while the rural population will shrink by 9 million (2.9%). By 2015, an estimated 52% of ASEAN’s population will live in urban areas compared with some 46% in 2007” (Martinez-Fernandez, & M. Powell, 2009, P. 13).

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systems and temporary inflows of people. In beneficial terms, remittances provided by individual or groups of migrants have been indentified by the World Bank as a stable injection of cash or non-cash transfers compared to other kinds of external flows. In particular, Global remittance flows have risen from US$101.6 billion in 1995 to US$ 317.7 billion by 2007, a threefold increase. (KM Company, available at: http://www.kmfs.org/node/57).
Table 2

Figure 1. Population Growth Rate in ASEAN Countries + 3 + India 1995-2007 (percent)

Source: Compiled from ILO (2008).
* Asean + 3: China, Japan and Korea.

Table 2: Extract from: Martinez-Fernandez, & Marcus Powell, 2009, p. 13. OECD

Table 3

Figure 2. Top 20 Developing Remittance Receiving Countries 2007

In terms of interest for the gradual disposition of local capabilities able to match with global and regional demands for entrepreneurship development is also dependent on a political framework, which can facilitate this economic transition despite regional financial disparities. On receiving sides, in terms of GDP rates and labour wages for China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan as attraction poles for regional migration. Regional labour figures reported for information across country areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Sex_EN</th>
<th>GDP per person engaged (constant 1990 US$ at PPP)</th>
<th>GDP per person engaged (1990=100)</th>
<th>GDP per hour worked (constant 1990 US$ at PPP)</th>
<th>GDP per hour worked (1990=100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>China</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>7.048.276</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>193.01.00</td>
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</table>

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Sex_EN</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>Labour force participation rate (%)</th>
<th>Labour force ('000)</th>
<th>Population ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>182,618.500</td>
<td>193,518,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<td>35-54</td>
<td>91.1</td>
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<td>413,043,000</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>606,561,000</td>
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<td>15-64</td>
<td>79.8</td>
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<td>965,401,600</td>
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<td>MF</td>
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<td>909,935</td>
<td>1,022,085</td>
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<td>2,516,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong, China</td>
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<td>68.9</td>
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<td>5,289,006</td>
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<td>Macau, China</td>
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<td>MF</td>
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<td>85.3</td>
<td>173,000</td>
<td>203,000</td>
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<td>Macau, China</td>
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<td>MF</td>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>249,000</td>
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<td>Macau, China</td>
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<td>MF</td>
<td>15-64</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>320,751</td>
<td>429,772</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Labour force participation rate (ILO estimates; by sex and age group)- http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp

### Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Sex_EN</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>Employment ('000)</th>
<th>Population ('000)</th>
<th>Employment-to-population ratio (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>633,714,200</td>
<td>843,089,000</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>129,118,200</td>
<td>230,944,700</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>762,832,400</td>
<td>1,074,034,000</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>3,199,000</td>
<td>5,269,600</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hong Kong, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>316,700</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>3,515,700</td>
<td>6,178,600</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>279,700</td>
<td>381,400</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>33,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macau, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>313,500</td>
<td>468,500</td>
<td>66.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>9,514,500</td>
<td>16,159,100</td>
<td>58.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>758,400</td>
<td>3,180,100</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>10,272,800</td>
<td>19,339,300</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment-to-population ratio (ILO estimates; by sex and age group)-http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Sex_EN</th>
<th>Labour force ('000)</th>
<th>Unemployed ('000)</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>3,694,675</td>
<td>193,025</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Macau, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>329,200</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan, China</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>10,917,000</td>
<td>639,000</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total unemployment (by sex); (ILO estimates)-http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp
Table 8 Migration and urbanization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Net International Migration Rate (a) (per 1,000 population)</th>
<th>Urban Population (percent of total population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, People's Rep. Of</td>
<td>-0.1 -0.1 -0.3 -0.3</td>
<td>26.4 29.0 36.2 46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong, China</td>
<td>10.1 9.3 3.3 3.3</td>
<td>99.5 100.0 100.0 100.0 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, Rep. Of</td>
<td>-2.9 -0.3 -0.3 -0.1</td>
<td>73.8 78.2 79.6 81.5 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>-15.4 -4.3 1.4 -0.8</td>
<td>54.6 51.6 57.2 62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei, China(b)</td>
<td>... ... ... ...</td>
<td>50.6 53.1 55.8 59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>-0.8 -0.8 -1.0 -0.7</td>
<td>... ... 23.4 25.4 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>-38.2 0.1 11.6 2.9</td>
<td>... 21.0 21.0 30.9 (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>-0.2 -0.3 -0.3 -0.2</td>
<td>25.6 26.6 27.7 29.4 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>... ... ... ...</td>
<td>26.0 25.6 27.0 35.0 (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>-1.0 -0.9 -0.8 -0.7</td>
<td>8.9 10.9 13.4 17.2 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>-2.9 -4.3 -4.6 -3.0</td>
<td>17.2 16.4 15.7 15.1 (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southeast Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>2.6 2.2 2.0 1.8</td>
<td>65.8 68.6 71.1 74.4 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>2.8 1.3 0.2 -0.1</td>
<td>... 14.8 16.0 19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>-0.8 -0.9 -0.9 -0.6</td>
<td>30.9 35.9 42.1 43.1 (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>-1.3 -3.4 -4.1 -2.4</td>
<td>15.4 17.4 22.0 29.7 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>3.0 4.5 1.2 1.0</td>
<td>51.1 54.7 62.0 63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>-0.6 0.0 -4.2 -2.0</td>
<td>24.9 26.1 28.0 31.9 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>-2.7 -2.4 -2.2 -2.0</td>
<td>48.8 54.0 58.5 65.0 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>15.4 19.6 6.7 22.0</td>
<td>100.0 100.0 100.0 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>-0.1 -1.5 4.4 0.9</td>
<td>18.0 18.0 19.0 33.8 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>-2.4 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5</td>
<td>19.5 20.7 24.2 29.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (a) refers to annual average- (b) for urban population, refers to localities of 100,000 or more inhabitants

Source: ADB, Regional Tables, 2010, p. 132.

Migration Plans

From reported data in East and South Asia, contingent reasons that can affect labour mobilization have been identified in terms of significant trading shifts, with reorganizational development plans which require the attention of multiple stakeholders. Cooperation factors facilitating dialogues among government actors, private-industrial employers, and labour unions have in effect been practiced within dynamic regional and local environments that have been responsive to workforce’s demands and employers grounding needs for specific required support. However, the existence of set of policies and labour regulations that have been already in place within transformed global
economies need also to absorb a further improvement of national capacities. Because, when dealing, at the same time, with migrant workers, labour age, gender, skills, and social protection measures, with adequate policy design, it remains quite crucial an increased understanding among social and economic actors. By evaluating new options for responsible accountable behaviours while facing regional transformation changes has been challenging for a fragile pursuance of legal systems affected by weak enforcements or by public administrations that have worsened social order and pro-poor policies. Nonetheless, in South Asia more greater social demand has also come from normal citizens who have proposed innovative socio-economic initiatives by which “…policy markers should continue to respond to growing citizens demands for greater accountability, building on success and learning from failures, will help accelerate and sustain the growth and inclusion that the region needs.” (Dasgupta, Ghani, & May, 2009, p. 398). From such social departure, it can be also stressed out that international economic reports have suggested that a global economy like China’s case43 has required a flexible labour market for economic and social benefits but why? With boosting economic factors and the aggregation of workforces in non-farm jobs with increasing rural-urban migration internally and externally, it appears that consolidation policies of East Asian nations have opened up towards structural models that may also represent mounting barriers for the internalization of empowering conditions for the workers and local communities in terms of managerial ownerships and institutional assets.44 Underlying profitable strategies can be found in a World Bank 2003 financial document which reports, among others, about migration and new urban economic opportunities: “Migration also supports the efficiency gains of agglomeration. Manufacturing and services are often more efficient when concentrated in dense business-industrial areas, such as cities and urban peripheries. International experience indicates that total factor productivity in medium-size cities and towns rises by about 10% when their size doubles. By international standards, medium-size cities and towns in China seem too small to effectively exploit urban scale economies and become competitive as national and

43 Since the 1970s the reconfiguration of capitalized global productions towards China have increased capital and workers’ mobility with transformation aspects that dealt with non-unionised labour and spatial distribution of working classes following productive investments in different periods of time.
44 As example, the 1997 Asia’s economic recession that affected Asian countries, converged to a sense of increased awareness about a prospective regional cooperation that involved cooperation activities. The relevance of interdependent factors for overcoming financial crisis led Asian partners to explore critical vulnerabilities to enhance economic interdependence. The creation of regional schemes extending further relational implications for trade exchanges and cooperation have also been aligned with worldwide regions in competing regional trade areas. (N. Bono, 2002).
international commercial centers. By boosting productivity, the expansion of towns and cities and the development of their peripheries are likely to benefit, on average, the current urban residents as well as rural migrants.” (WB, 2003, p. 30)

However, migrant national policies equalizing in absolute terms local and regional conditions for labour provision in urban areas have multi-facets aspects that involve key social determinants for local entrepreneurial capacities, which can challenge a systematic allocation of labour in industrial areas. This also means that domestic industrial development can broadly address benefiting outcomes but without solving labour mobility needs for long term security and protection plans. The problem of massive production factors in urban areas has been creating a regional divide where rural communities have migrated for labour yes because of increasing disparities and lower gaining power acquisition in China, as elsewhere in the region. Essentially, as highlighted “the lack of sufficient gainful employment in the countryside in many agricultural provinces is the main reason why rural workers have left the countryside. Because of the serious institutional barriers, the rural and urban populations and the respective labour markets operate as two largely separate rural and urban hukou-based ‘circuits’.” (Kam Wing Chan 2010, p.7). This is one aspect that can have different interpretations and logical approaches that need in any case to show which alternative options should be prepared for workforce decision-making participation/interaction with local and centralized authorities. A significant demographic shift between 1995-2000 already provides a substantial picture about this phenomenon within China with inter-county migration that amounted from rural to urban areas to an estimated 50.32 million (Kam Wing Chan 2010). Good governance for economic integration with a migrant labour force means that under financial unstable conditions, it should promote cooperation and the establishment of operable decisional groups reforming regional and national discussions about ownership of land controls, enforcement of protection laws, inclusion of labour

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45 As highlighted “The household registration under the hukou system defines legal residence in a village, town or city at birth and determines entitlements to local jobs, housing, schooling, health care, and social security, and in rural areas, to farming land. …Strict restrictions on migration as well as other constraints on mobility such as geographically segmented and outmoded system for social insurance and public service provision are prime causes of labour market segmentation in China.” (A. Bandara, 2005, p. 16).

46 In addition to this, “Pattern of unemployment trends in the Asia-Pacific region indicates a rather dismal performance relative to its outstanding economic performance. The number of unemployed in East Asia increased from 4 million in 1992 to 9 million in 2002 while that in South-East Asia and the Pacific increased from 5.5 million to 14.6 million. Total unemployment in South-Asia increased by 7 million during the same period. The rate of unemployment increased from 2.5 per cent in 1994 to 3.6 per cent in 2004 in East Asia.” (A. Bandara, 2005, p.4)
representatives, and legitimacy paths that can lead to an overall restructure of regional/domestic/local economic, and social facilities for human security globally connected.

In present times, just advocating for an increased economic integration without effective defensive mechanisms for common action-plans on labour mobility and labour creation, for instance, leaves open unspecified supervision elements that can disqualify the setting up of risk-taking behaviours for profit-making. In addition to this, the exposition to global financial crisis has largely committed members to international financial forum (e.g. IMF) towards protectionist supports against speculative attempts across regions (W. Thye Woo, 2009). The inner dynamics of diversified financial contexts can in effect revolve to transnational opposition where labour’s offer changes free mobility patterns between neighbouring countries.

Mobilizing, Relocating, Reconstructing

Usually, the constructive role of international labour migration has been to mobilize human resources, with inflow remittances that have followed domestic channels for the increase of savings in country of origin, and with professional backgrounds that have benefited from policy programs integrating locally the migrant population, through social networks and foreign community development. The ‘free movement’ of goods and persons has been expressed in international markets under construction of labour schemes that have been built according to the conditions of both urban and countryside places that attracted mobility through immigration and emigration processes. For the irregular migrants who have moved from places like Burma/Myanmar and Laos it has emerged a differentiated diplomatic response to their stay in urban areas, while crossing borders

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47 The Asian region has done significant progress to reducing poverty in the last two decades, what remains problematic is the aspect of so-called “working poor.” As noted “the share of working poor measured in terms of those employed earning less than $2 a day as a share of total employment stood as high as 88 per cent for South-Asia in 2003; the share of the $2 a day working poor in the South-East Asian region, which saw a rapid drop in poverty during the last few decades, was 59 per cent while that in East Asia was 49 per cent.” (A. Bandara, 2005, p. 18).

48 In East Asia, China has adopted specific bilateral service agreements with receiving countries where “according to its Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation by 1994 China had developed such cooperation with more than 50 countries around the world.” At the same time, China has also promoted migration policies that allow a legal management of migration against undocumented workforces in destination sites. (P. Wongboonsin, 2003, p. 71).
The demand for skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled work opportunities in countries like Thailand has been evolving especially for trading sectors concentrated in Southern production corridors e.g. Cambodia, where structural linkages between labour markets and subregional trade have been developed (P. Deshingkar, 2005). This delocalization of regional markets production has increased an intertwined migration effect with the presence of an internal migrant workforce moving just for the short periods across borders, so that in cases of instability or crisis, migrant labourers can independently cut on distances while opting to change their location (P. Deshingkar, 2005). The development factors that have determined specific policies for preferential production locations in parts of Asia still not fully integrated, have also had incremental effects on internal regional movements for employment, which have brought attractive prospects of prosperity in informal/formal sectors that in reality have offered unequal living conditions. In fact, institutional arrangements that have been in place between state administrations and employers have been conditioned by economic and social linkages that structurally define benefits and costs for the integration of migration policies, also modelled according to risk-sensitive environments.

In comparative migration trends encompassing parts of Asian’s areas it has been found that: “…the elimination of global restrictions to labour mobility generates worldwide efficiency gains ranging from 15-67 % of world gross domestic product. When only skilled labour is allowed to migrate, welfare gains are smaller – from 1-3 % of world gross domestic product – since skilled labour is only a small proportion of the labour force in developing regions. This lends credence to calls…for allowing freer movement for less skilled labour as a litmus test of the development contents of the Doha Round. Least developed countries have insisted that temporary labour mobility of the less skilled be freed up since this is where their comparative advantages is the greatest…” (L. Puri, UNCTAD, 2007, p.41). Substantially, increasing the socio-economic status of people that have been formally and informally drawn to production networks across Asia-Pacific region for a number of decades has had deeper integration effects with structural

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49 A state’s interventionist labour export policy has also characterized Myanmar and Viet Nam since the 1980s. In the Viet Nam’s case the government had adopted migration for overseas employment as a determinant factor of its employment policies.

50 In Asian labour relations, the legality of workforces had direct effects on their status by increasing/decreasing vulnerable conditions at work. In terms of illegal migrant status, work opportunities have been characterised by lower wages and insecurity levels that may foster intimidation practices and forms of exploitation.
inequalities that on the other hand have also favoured unemployment pockets of urban unskilled migrants (e.g. China’s case), with additional differentiated gender impacts about empowerment as well as human esclavage practices for the lack of decent working rights. In other words, ‘let the people come’ as they are for global labour mobility is also a question of letting them know about traditional and merchandised way of life that add knowledge advantages to initial accesses of productive jobs. Especially, in East Asia structural differences on industrial assets have caused technological asymmetries that foster labour trends for mobility. The adherence that can be given to production lines regionally developed has also determined a division of labour that requires enhanced efforts to cope with transformed development forces. This means that economic actors as later-new comers in the production chains have rapidly adapted to adjusted conditions in order to move to higher levels of technical innovations. In terms of labour mobility, responsive markets for a trained labour force have also required a time of adaptation in order to fundamentally absorb social changes for industrial and social development. Because, as put it “…while the main players of economic development are undoubtedly private firms, simply decontrolling and opening up the private sector does not generate sufficient impetus for growth if the country is saddled with underdeveloped markets, lack of human resources and technology, and low productivity. In order to kick start an economy trapped in the vicious circle of low income, savings, and technology, the role of government is crucial as an external agent imparting order and direction to the national economy.” (K. Ono, 2002, p.4) Following the development of states of East Asian economies, it can be noticed that groups of countries have enormous differences in terms of natural resources, demographic rates, cultures, leaderships, and managerial roles, which all together create multi-dimensional transitions that need reactive memberships to respond to international impacts of growing systems for global productions.

In this sense, a cooperation process among institutions with regional and domestic empowerment agents for socioeconomic outcomes, who have been giving more visibility to the building-up of interdependent systems with a liberal flow of labour interaction, it

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51 In central Asia for instance “of the women who are trafficked, the majority is aged 15-32 years, mainly from poor rural and urban areas where they wish to get away from miserable living conditions. Even through some enter into activity knowing that they will be employed in the sex industry, they are not aware of the exploitative conditions they will face…The main drivers of female trafficking in the region are poverty, gender discrimination, family violence and unemployment; hence the importance of tackling poverty and increasing options in rural communities to reduce vulnerability to trafficking at source.” (D. Abdurazakova, ESCAP, 2010, p.7).
also becomes a question of integration and progressive know-how development. As it has already been emphasized: “Asian producers…began to take part in relational value chain interactions that call for higher competences of suppliers in full package production and more autonomy…this has allowed generating backward linkages with the domestic economy and to develop more integrated domestic industry. This has also allowed knowledge exchange for building personal relationships and for learning how to make competitive consumer goods for the international market” (UNIDO, 2004, p.21).

As simple as it appears to be, it is far known that world technological expansions have rapidly modified production systems and decision-making activities of private partners in developed and newly developed countries. On such accounts, narrowing the gap in ASEAN countries, for instance, has posed a series of challenges about the regulation of labour markets and the shaping of protection mechanisms for the workforce. In ILO report 2006, it has been highlighted this aspect according to the institutional fragmentation in which social relations can make good/bad governance depending on restructuring functions embedded in legal frameworks that effectively can guarantee the ‘mise en place’ of maintenance systems for the regulation of industrial relations and domestic migrant labour in the region.  

In international country partnerships for labour, for example: “one of the main strands of activity undertaken by the ILO in Southeast Asia is to promote the use of bilateral and multilateral agreements between destination and origin countries, together with development assistance, tripartite consultations, and agreements between workers’ organizations” (S. Kneebone, 2010 p. 387). However, a sense of awareness about regional labour agreements with national counterparts can also suggest that a formal engagement level of states and national workers alliances has been a matter of concern for the role played by industry recruitment agencies, and the risk of exploitation for vulnerable segments of migrant workforces, especially women.

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52 For instance, “The Philippines has developed an extensive institutional and legal framework to oversee the migration process; it includes assistance prior to departure and on site and continues through the return and reintegration stages. The package of labour migration policies and programmes in the Philippines combines facilitation marketing, regulation and migrant worker protection and empowerment. Where formal labour migration schemes do not exist, clandestine labour movements emerge.” (UNESCAP, 2008, SDD/IMD/HLM/2008/INF/1, p.3).

53 Migrant women with low-skilled preparations enter global labour markets in the field of domestic activities on temporary work conditions. As examples, “women constitute a large majority of migrant workers leaving Indonesia (79%), the Philippines (72%) and Sri Lanka (64 %). It is known that a large number of women who originate in countries such as Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam migrate clandestinely in search of employment abroad,” (UNESCAP, 2008, SDD/IMD/HLM/2008/INF/1, p.6).
Discrimination and vulnerability factors, unfortunately, remain commercialization effects that contribute to unclarity about the composition of workers and their distribution across industries. A sectoral specialization of workers moving to places in Malaysia and Thailand will lead them mainly to fisheries industries and agriculture, while Taiwan and Korea have been dependent on foreign labour for traditional labour-intensive industries, with Hong Kong and Singapore employing a much higher number of women working in the domestic and entertainment industries with unrecorded data in official national categories (Prema-chandra, Athukorala, 2006). Similarly, the fast pace of traditional industries relocated to ‘free’ trading spaces has been posing political motives to ask new questions about what trickles the migration process in Asia, what are the pushing and driving factors of free trade and mobile labour markets? Which restrictive legislations have been causing a compression of living standards for migrants? And who benefits from wide range of free-trade policy conditions? A more introspective analysis about this economic development process and the export of an industrial workforce can be undertaken for further studies on medium-term and long-term market programs where available data can be a problematic issue for the country involved, and from case to case. In essence, this paper has been a closer look given to the policy of East Asia migration equivalent to say to human networks in migrant labour for competing markets. Is this process endless? The supply of workers across regions has been taking an increasing competition where economic implementing plans have been expanding labour markets across world regions. The circuits of international development have established differentiated stages of innovation that can be related to following determinants:

- Domestic markets compatibility
- Integration of innovation activities
- Geographical localization of scale economies
- Economic transaction costs
- Socioeconomic interdependence (D. Ernst, 2008)

Recognizing that these factors have global dynamic effects on labour means to have a possible strategic provision about regional knowledge systems that may allow political
and economic organizations to the establishment of compatible programs managing the flow of labour within and across borders. What has been done until present is a contribution to a national economic development advanced by preferential treatments of countries. However, unemployment pressures have already been felt and job’s satisfaction level can have negative impacts on the labour force at home and abroad. Encouraging a particular dimension for an open-door policy means to prepare for “government policies aiming at managing the volume and direction of labour flows, training of workers going abroad, and protecting their rights and welfare” (S. Y. Chia, 2006, p. 361). Alleviating poverty is essential but with significant steps that can be taken for cooperation and coordination in and outside the Asia-Pacific region for accelerated trade of goods and services, and also beyond that.

Conclusion

Regional labour integration can play a significant role in developing stability for the region and good governance in key areas across nations. The inside and outside governance path in competitive markets needs to study an alternance of involved disciplines that are able to manage demand and offer for labour across boundaries. The evolving complexity of East Asian trading networks involves a major density of labour activities that fundamentally relies in parts of them on intra-regional mobile labour. For these reasons, a single answer to emerging issues on transnational labour between China and least developed countries is not enough to picture an immediacy of action that should ensure a future protection of standardized procedures for competitive states based on a permanent and temporary migrant workforce that struggles to get an entry point of choice in global markets.
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