

# FLUID SECURITY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Exploring connections between mobility and security

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## TEMPORARY MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

The conditions of globalization present a considerable challenge to orthodox conceptions of migration and migration control. Today, speed and ease of travel, globalised opportunities for work and education, and transnational family networks, as well as an increase in the number of 'fragile' or 'failed' states mean that cycles of migration, and of return and re-migration are more complex and unpredictable than in previous eras of large-scale migration. OECD statistics indicate that Australia is a key destination for temporary migrants. According to the 'International Migration Outlook' report published by SOPEMI in 2011, Australia hosted 228,000 international students, 188,000 working holidaymakers and 127,000 other temporary workers in 2009. Australia accounts for 50% of working holidaymakers across OECD countries and is one of few countries to experience an increase rather than a decline in temporary migration following the global economic downturn. The table below confirms that, relative to comparable countries with developed economies, Australia has a far greater dependence on foreign born visitors both as workers and consumers.

| COUNTRY  | % of total labour force foreign born (2009) | Number of international students per 100 persons aged 20-24 (2008) |
|--|---|--|
| AUSTRALIA  | 26.9%                                       | 15.9   |
| CANADA   |   | 4.1  |
| FRANCE   | 11.6%                                       | 6.1  |
| ITALY  | 11.3%                                       | 2.0  |
| NEW ZEALAND  |   | 10.4   |
| NORWAY   | 9.5%  | 1.5  |
| SPAIN  | 18.5%                                       | 1.4  |
| UK   | 12.9%                                       | 8.4  |
| USA  | 16.2%                                       | 2.8  |
| INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OUTLOOK: SOPEMI 2011, OECD, 2011 |   |  |

New conceptual tools based on regions, networks and fluidity are being adopted by sociologists and migration scholars to describe these new patterns of mobility. The boundaries between temporary and permanent residence are increasingly unsettled and contested. These trends are mirrored by fluidity in legal status, so that non-citizens may move back and forth between legality and illegality within a host state. This study develops the concept of 'fluid security' that enhances understandings of the connections between mobility and both human and national security in the Asia Pacific. Based on empirical case studies with mobile populations from China, Indonesia, Samoa and Tonga who are temporarily resident in Australia, it examines mobility in the region and its impact on the security of individuals, communities and nations in the Asia Pacific, concentrating on four key regional relationships (Australia / Samoa; Australia / Tonga; Australia / Indonesia; Australia / China). The objective is to increase understanding of the dynamics of security and mobility by exploring the inter-relationships between countries of origin, destination and return in relation to four key domains of human security: economic, legal, personal and socio-cultural. While the reality of border politics demands that human security be considered alongside the imperatives of national security, the study adopts a human-centred approach which places individual perceptions and security needs at the heart of the analysis.

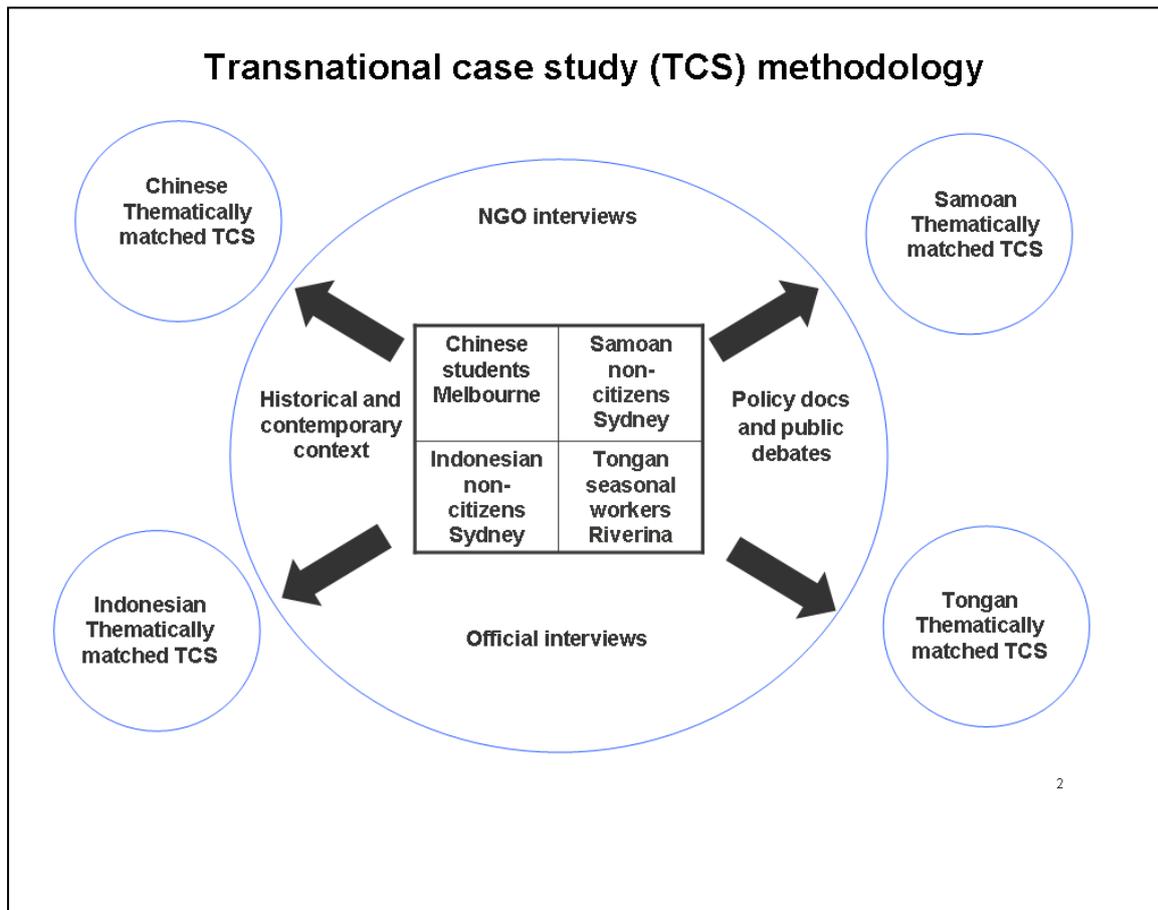
## STUDYING FLUID SECURITY

The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. Under what circumstances, and to what degree, is cross border mobility (both incoming and outgoing) perceived as a threat to the security of the nation-state? How are these insecurities manifest?
2. How do different security domains (economic, legal, personal and socio-cultural) interact to influence individual experiences of security and insecurity amongst diaspora communities and mobile populations?
3. What policies would enhance both the security of the host nation and the security of temporary non-citizens?

The research will be pursued through a series of mixed methodology case studies centred on each of the migration partnerships i.e. Australia / Samoa; Australia / Tonga; Australia / Indonesia; Australia / China. Members of diaspora communities, NGOs and service providers who support these communities and officials from relevant regulatory bodies are being interviewed in selected locations within Australia. The interviews will explore the factors driving and mediating cross border mobility, and the factors that affect experiences of reception and inclusion after arrival.

The case studies will also have a transnational dimension in which themes arising from the interviews conducted in Australia will be further explored through targeted interviews and data collection in countries of origin. The overall methodology for the study is depicted in the diagram below. Summaries from each of the case studies will be published as Research Briefs as findings become available.



Prepared for the Border Crossing Observatory by Leanne Weber, September 2012

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