



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong  
Research Online

---

Faculty of Arts - Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

---

2006

# The Borders Within: Mobility and Enclosure in the Riau Islands

M Ford

*University of Sydney*

Lenore T. Lyons

*University of Wollongong, lenorel@uow.edu.au*

---

## Publication Details

Ford, MT & Lyons, LT, The Borders Within: Mobility and Enclosure in the Riau Islands, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 2006, 47(2), 257-271. Copyright 2006 Blackwell Publishing. Journal information is available [here](#) .

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:  
[research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

# **The Borders Within: Mobility and Enclosure in the Riau Islands<sup>1</sup>**

Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons

The creation of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) in 1990 is often cited as an example of an increasingly 'borderless' world in which people, goods and information flow seamlessly across national borders (Ohmae 1990, 1995). The IMS-GT, as an example of the way market linkages and investment flows transcend political boundaries, is said to typify Ohmae's concept of 'region states' which are able to overcome the restrictions of national sovereignty. Scholars working within the fields of border studies, migration studies and transnationalism are increasingly critical of Ohmae's post-nationalist claims. Arguing that nation-states continue to play powerful roles in territorialising global order, they point to the significant role of 'bordering practices' in shaping the experiences of different groups of national subjects as they seek to move across geopolitical boundaries (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002; Cunningham 2004). In studies of the Singapore-Indonesian component of the IMS-GT which centres on the Riau Islands of Batam and Bintan, this attention to the unevenness of transnational flows has focused primarily on the ease with which Singaporeans, along with Singaporean capital, flow freely into Indonesian territory, and the difficulties that Riau Islanders face when attempting to move in the opposite direction (Peachey et al. 1998; Lindquist 2002: 18; Sparke et al. 2004). These accounts take as the object of their analysis the material and symbolic practices of (b)ordering and control exercised by Singaporean and Indonesian immigration and customs officials, other government bodies, and naval patrols. While these studies also begin to examine the multiple ways in which the IMS-GT supports and inhibits other forms of movement within and along the Singapore-Indonesia border, important distinctions *between* the realities of *different* local communities are often lost in a literature which

concentrates primarily on the island of Batam and generally either ignores local communities elsewhere in the Riau Islands or otherwise aggregates their experiences with those of Batam Islanders (cf Grundy-Warr et al. 1999; Mack 2004; Sparke et al. 2004).

As Wee and Chou (1997: 533) observe, the IMS-GT can be understood as a series of ‘multiple realities’: the realities of development planners in Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Singapore; the reality of the IMS-GT as a self-contained economic area; and the realities of local communities in Riau. This paper provides a more nuanced understanding of the lives of the people who occupy the Riau Borderlands by shifting our analysis away from the fixed line that represents the geopolitical boundary between Singapore and Indonesia, and focusing instead on the boundaries that define the multiple spaces which constitute the border zone. Drawing on the significant insights that previous studies of the IMS-GT have made regarding differential mobilities across the border, we expand our analysis to include a local level study of the ways in which a community living within the border has responded to the growth triangle. In particular, we focus on those people who do not cross international borders, but whose lives are increasingly shaped by national and sub-national bordering processes. Through our examination of the subjective experiences of people living in Tanjung Pinang, the main town on Bintan Island, we seek to re-introduce an awareness of distinctions within the borderlands in order to better understand the complex and nuanced practices of bordering within the IMS-GT.<sup>2</sup>

### **Finding a vocabulary**

The paper is, like all anthropology of the borders, an analysis of the ‘narrative of borderlanders’ (Horstmann 2004: 7), in this case the narratives of Indonesians living in the town of Tanjung Pinang.<sup>3</sup> In our analysis of Bintan Islanders’ experiences of the IMS-GT we draw on Cunningham

and Heyman's (2004) explication of cross-border interactions. While Cunningham and Heyman recognise borderlanders' potential to disrupt practices of state and nation, they reject celebratory accounts of border crossings that over-emphasise the importance of those crossings as a symbol of post-modern deterritorialisation of identity and geography; arguing instead for a more textured understanding of bordering processes (2004: 289-93). In their attempt to re-centre debates on the nature of borders, Cunningham and Heyman identify mobility and enclosure as two points on a continuum of movement. They argue that mobility is only one way in which movement is produced and experienced. As they describe it, enclosure is the inverse of mobility: whereas mobility refers to 'social processes that enable and induce' the movement of 'specific goods, people and ideas', enclosure refers to the social processes that 'delimit and restrict' that movement (2004: 293-4). In a similar vein, Shamir (2005: 199) writes of a 'global mobility regime, oriented to closure and the blocking of access'.

By introducing the concept of enclosure to the discussion of differential mobilities, Cunningham and Heyman create a 'framework of movement' which can be used to explore the different impact that borders have on the communities they seek to hold together or keep apart. The idea of enclosure (as opposed to immobility) 'usefully transforms the assumption that people and things have homes, locations, or places into an open question about how sets of people and things and their "proper" locations are defined, internalized and enforced', thus allowing us to understand borders as sites where movement is structured by ongoing social processes that permit, monitor or halt movement (Cunningham and Heyman 2004: 293).<sup>4</sup> By using the concepts of enclosure and mobility to explore the differential social processes through which borders are constructed we are able to better understand the impact of Singapore's proximity on life in the Riau Islands. These concepts provide us with a vocabulary with which to more closely examine the impact of changing political imperatives and shifts in the balance of economic and cultural capital along the border. More

importantly, when applied to bordering practices *within* the boundaries of the Indonesian state, they allow us to better differentiate between the experiences of different communities in the Riau Islands. The history of the relationship between the Riau Islands and Singapore before and under the IMS-GT is a story of the expansion and contraction of access across borders, which incorporates elements of both mobility and enclosure. More importantly perhaps it is a story of how, under the IMS-GT, the increased influence of Singapore in the Indonesian borderlands has created physical and symbolic barriers to mobility within Indonesia's national boundaries. In the following sections we explore how, despite the promises of integration and freedom of movement, the lives of people living in Tanjung Pinang have come to be defined more by enclosure than mobility under the IMS-GT.

### **Echoes of the *Zaman Dollar*<sup>5</sup>**

It is important to remember in the context of studies of the IMS-GT that the border between Singapore and Insular Riau is relatively new. In pre-colonial times, trade routes operating throughout the Malay Archipelago acted as conduits for the movement of people and goods and facilitated the creation of strong social, cultural and economic ties amongst different communities. Insular Riau became the capital of the Johor Sultanate in the early 1700s and was the main entrepot in the region for most of that century.<sup>6</sup> Throughout this period large numbers of migrants, including Bugis traders and warriors, as well as Chinese, moved into the region. Increasing competition between the Dutch and English in Southeast Asia finally saw the British focus their attention on Singapore. With the Anglo Dutch Treaty of London (1824), two artificial boundaries were created between the Dutch East Indies and the British Straits Settlements. The treaty effectively created a split in the Johor-Riau Sultanate and changed the regional political dynamics of the region (Trocki 1979).

Since that time Singapore has transformed itself from a nineteenth century backwater to the dominant politico-economic power in the region through a series of historical accidents – or through what Wee and Chou refer to as ‘particular processes of economic and political structuration’ (1997: 530). As a result of these processes, the Riau Islands have become increasingly tied to the Singapore economy (Trocki 1990). Lindquist (2002: 52) states that using powerful Chinese networks and ‘an indigenous state model, based on a powerful center and unclear borders, allowed Singapore to transgress the territorial limitations created by the border and bind the whole Riau Archipelago to its markets’. After Singapore became part of the British sphere of influence, the Singapore-Insular Riau borderlands was transformed into a traditional Southeast Asian borderland region,<sup>7</sup> where people of common ethnic backgrounds (Malay and Straits Chinese) moved easily across a nominal geo-political divide. Almost everyone we spoke to in Tanjung Pinang emphasised the ‘shared history’ of Singapore and Riau and the ‘familial relationships’ between Singaporeans and Riau Islanders.<sup>8</sup> In addition to its social and cultural aspects, this shared history had a strong economic element. This economic relationship continued long after Tanjung Pinang ceased to be the dominant economic power in the region: until 1963, the economy of the Riau Islands in general, and Tanjung Pinang in particular, was far more closely integrated with Singapore than it was with the rest of Indonesia (see Wee 1985; also Lindquist 2002).

Indeed, it was not until the early 1960s that concepts of citizenship and nationality became more closely linked to notions of sovereign territory and boundary maintenance centred on the nation-states of Indonesia and Singapore. However, for the people of Tanjung Pinang, freedom of movement continued long after the formal border dividing them from Singapore was established. Hamzah, a sixty-two year old Bugis fisher who has been in the islands since 1957, recalls:

In the 1960s I remember going to Singapore with my brother-in-law. We went on a little boat with an outboard motor. It was only 4 horsepower. We took dried coconut, or sometimes fish to trade in Singapore. It was great. We weren't well off, but we could afford to buy whatever we needed there – rice, sugar, sometimes clothes (Interview, July 2005).

Younger people in Tanjung Pinang also share communal memories about the time before 1963. Abdullah, a thirty-eight year old civil servant, recalls:

I remember my parents saying that before the Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia life in the islands was measured in dollars, and everyone – be they farmers or civil servants – was really well off. Imagine! According to the stories of the old people in Tanjung Pinang, they'd go to Singapore just to clean their jackets, just to buy rice!<sup>9</sup> We can only imagine how well off Tanjung Pinang people were then. Their relationship with Singapore was so close that they'd do their shopping in Singapore! Now it's the reverse. Singaporeans come to Indonesia to shop (Interview, July 2005).

As Abdullah suggests, with the onset of Confrontation Tanjung Pinang people's access to Singapore changed drastically. Movement across the Straits was restricted and Riau Islanders found themselves enclosed by the newly imposed national border. Currency provides a useful metaphor for the impact that is enclosure had on changes in the relationship not only between Singapore and the Riau Islands, but between the Riau Islands and the Sumatran mainland in the period during and after Confrontation:

Kepri<sup>10</sup> is closer to Singapore [than to mainland Sumatra] so trading focused on Singapore. The Islands were flooded by Singaporean goods, and even the currency was Singapore

dollars. Because of this many people from other parts of Indonesia came to Kepri. That's why the population here is so mixed. But when Confrontation occurred with Malaya, there the flow of goods stopped not only from Malaya but from Singapore. With the coming of the Rupiah, the fortunes of the islands fell, and Mainland Riau began to dominate because it could export its primary products (Interview, June 2002).

As Hamzah remembers it:

During Confrontation it became really hard to get to and from the islands, so it was very difficult to keep our relationships with Singapore going. As a result, we really suffered economically. It was very difficult to get even basic necessities. Sometimes we'd have the money to buy food, and there'd simply be none to buy (Interview, July 2005).

Hamzah's recollections of the difficulties of life during Confrontation were shared by other older people in Tanjung Pinang. According to Rizki, a sixty-five year old retired civil servant, 'Things became hard during Confrontation. People in the islands did it tough because all their overseas connections were cut. The only thing people could do was to become involved in smuggling.' (Interview July 2005).

In the stories that circulate about 'life before Confrontation', movement across the Straits is presented both as an *a priori* way of life and a marker of economic advantage. Residents of Tanjung Pinang crossed over into Singapore because they could (they possessed the means to purchase goods and services in Singapore) and because they always had (Singapore and Bintan were part of the same historical maritime economy). In these accounts, Confrontation, rather than Indonesian Independence, is pivotal in marking the new 'national' (unnatural) border between Indonesia and



Malaya/Singapore. The new border, by enclosing sovereign territory, not only restricted movement within the Straits, but also made people on either side of the border into national citizens. Confrontation is thus pivotal in re-imagining and re-constructing the borders between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>11</sup>

As Rizki suggests, however, nation-building and the creation of national citizens was an incomplete process. While mobility contracted during and after Confrontation, smuggling between Bintan and Singapore was evidence that the process of enclosure was incomplete. As relations between Indonesia and the newly independent nations of Malaysia and Singapore began to normalize, ethnic Chinese and Malays resumed their movements back and forth across the Straits., By the late 1970s this traffic had been largely re-established – although the process of border-crossing had become more formalised. As Rizki remembers it:

From 1978, things improved. The relationship was restored, then Tanjung Pinang people could go to Singapore with a passport and Singaporeans could come here with a passport. People started to move a lot more again (Interview, July 2005).

Restored mobility brought with it a return of prosperity to the islands. As Zainuddin, a forty year old petty trader commented, ‘By the late 1970s, Tanjung Pinang’s economy was pretty good, and we all lived quite comfortably. There was a really good feeling of community, then. Everything was safe and peaceful.’ (Interview, July 2005). Although by this time the rupiah had long been the official currency of the islands, a large proportion of economic transactions in Tanjung Pinang were again being conducted in dollars. Despite the official imposition of duties on goods flowing in and out of the islands, in the 1970s and 1980s Tanjung Pinang’s access to cheap products from Singapore was maintained through its flourishing culture of smuggling. For many residents of

Tanjung Pinang the national border figured little in their everyday interactions across the Straits. While passports were normally required for individuals passing through immigration checkpoints, most traders continued to operate as they had before the border was regulated. Tanjung Pinang's economy was strong and there were few remarkable differences between life in Singapore and life in the islands.<sup>12</sup>

By the late 1980s, however, as Singapore's industrialisation drive matured, life in Tanjung Pinang and Singapore became less and less alike. While the islanders continued to benefit from their close proximity to the 'Asian tiger', economic and social development did not keep up with the pace of change in Singapore. Physical movement across the border by traders and smugglers continued as it had for decades, but the border itself began to play a much stronger symbolic role in marking out the differences between a developing Singapore and a backward Indonesia. Our respondents indicated that for the first time since Confrontation, the border began to represent a barrier – not because it restricted physical movement but because growing economic disparities began to disrupt their dreams and expectations about a shared 'way of life' across the Straits.

The IMS-GT promised to restore those dreams. As the cost of local labour rose in Singapore, Indonesia's low-skilled workforce began to attract the interest of Singapore's private and government linked companies. The IMS-GT was one element of a regionalisation strategy aimed reducing Singapore's reliance on foreign investment and overseas markets, and making the economy more resilient in times of recession (Yeung 1998). By relocating Singapore's low-end manufacturing industries offshore, the government sought to expand its economic and security borders into the region. The underpinning philosophy of the IMS-GT was economic complementarity in which Singaporean capital would be combined with Indonesian and Malaysian labour and land to facilitate cross-border regional growth (Sparke et al. 2004). As a direct result of

the growth triangle initiative, industrial manufacturing zones and tourism projects were established on Batam and Bintan.<sup>13</sup>

Despite rapid economic development, however, the promise that the IMS-GT would transform Insular Riau into the image of Singapore has not been fulfilled. On Batam, many factories and housing complexes lie abandoned, and the hotels cater predominantly to the sex tourism industry. On Bintan, a small manufacturing sector provides limited jobs for locals and the large tourism enclave remits little income to the local government or its people. Grundy Warr et al. (1999) argue that the failure to ‘fast-track’ development in Batam and Bintan demonstrates unwillingness on the part of the Singaporean and Indonesian governments to achieve a functionally integrated cross-border economy. Yet despite the limitations of the IMS-GT, our respondents perceived the 1990s as another time of prosperity – prosperity which was again measured most concretely by the exchange rate. In a statement highly reminiscent of the discourse around the *Zaman Dollar*, Ilham used the currency as the basis for his periodization of the decade:

There were two phases in the 1990s. There was before the crisis and after the crisis. Before the crisis, Tanjung Pinang’s economy was good, and people’s basic needs were more than met. But after the crisis, when Singapore used dollars and Tanjung Pinang used rupiah, the difference was enormous. As a result the prices of basic goods have risen time and time again. People in Tanjung Pinang can no longer afford to buy anything (Interview, July 2005).

As Ilham’s comments suggest, the stability of the exchange rate before and after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 again became a barometer both for islanders’ welfare and for the health of their relationship with Singapore. As Rini observed, ‘Because we’re on the border with Singapore, the

exchange rate is a real issue. Now that the dollar is so much higher than the rupiah, everything in the market has gone up.’ (Interview, July 2005). Her observations were corroborated by Abdullah, who commented that:

In Indonesia, but especially in Tanjung Pinang, we’re enormously sensitive to the value of the dollar.<sup>14</sup> In the 1990s, Tanjung Pinang was stable, because we measured everything in dollars. In the 1990s the exchange rate was quite low...one dollar was worth about a thousand or at most two thousand. Now it’s almost six thousand. How many percent is that? The collapse of the rupiah in 1997 had an enormous effect on everyone, but especially on the lower and middle classes. Prices skyrocketed, and inflation was very high. This affected us not only economically, but socially. So many people have suffered. Kids had to drop out of school because their parents couldn’t afford to pay, and many people couldn’t even afford the basics anymore because everything became so expensive. Our wages were nothing in comparison to the prices of even the most basic necessities. In the 1990s everything was great in Tanjung Pinang. Life wasn’t like it is now, when we’re really crying out (*betul-betul menjerit*) (Interview, July 2005).

The Asian Financial Crisis reduced the value of Singapore’s economic investment in Riau, thus threatening its economic growth. More significantly, it also brought home the broader implications that economic downturn in Indonesia would have on Singapore’s physical security. Free access to Singapore was one of the benefits offered to the citizens of Riau under the IMS-GT,<sup>15</sup> but the crisis exposed the significant inequalities between the rights of Singaporeans and Indonesians to cross the border.

In 1998 as a result of the Crisis, Singapore witnessed an unprecedented growth in the numbers of arrests of illegal immigrants entering Singapore via the Riau Islands. The illegal entrants were mostly young and middle-aged men (The Straits Times 1998). The authorities identified Batam and Tanjung Pinang as major hubs for people smuggling syndicates who operated throughout Indonesia. In an effort to crack down on illegal migration, the Singaporean government stepped up its coastal surveillance, as well as heightening immigration controls at the major checkpoints in the ferry terminals that serviced arrivals from the Riau Islands. Johan Lindquist (2002: 8) in his study of life on Batam during and after the crisis, reports that demand for *uang tunjuk* (show money) increased as Singaporean immigration officials increasingly required Indonesian tourists to demonstrate that they had the means to spend time in Singapore. To spread news of its harsh treatment of illegal entrants, the Immigration Department started showing videos to passengers departing for Batam and Bintan at the World Trade Centre and Tanah Merah Ferry Terminals warning about tough immigration laws for illegal workers. The video showed illegal migrants being arrested at worksites and flats. Indonesians passing through the terminals were encouraged to tell their compatriots ‘back home’ about the government crackdowns on ‘illegals’.<sup>16</sup>

Since September 11, movement across the borders has been even more tightly controlled. At the Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal, through which most Bintan Islanders pass into Singapore, it takes working and lower-middle class Indonesian citizens many times longer than other foreigners to pass through immigration. Their documents are carefully scrutinised, and they are often interrogated at length about their reasons for wanting to enter Singapore. These recent security concerns have also focused on the inter-linked issues of terrorism and piracy. The Singapore government has expressed concerns that ‘regional terror groups like the Jemaah Islamiah might use the strait as a launching pad to hit ports with a devastating “floating bomb”’ (Vijayan 2004). In 2004, an effort to address these issues, the Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean governments launched a joint defence

initiative to patrol the Strait. While smuggling of goods and people has been a particular focus of the crackdown, local islanders travelling within the Straits have also come under increased scrutiny as a result of these exercises. The growth triangle promised to improve the ease of movement between the Riau Islands and Singapore, but the Financial Crisis and heightened concerns about terrorism have seen the border become much more fixed and impermeable from the Indonesian side. Border patrols and increased scrutiny of Indonesians at immigration checkpoints work to keep Riau Islanders out of Singapore, closing them off from their families and restricting access to trading networks. As Abdullah indicated, however, for Singaporeans the border remained open and the Financial Crisis in fact facilitated their ease of movement.

Bordering practices are not only enacted at immigration and customs points. For the majority of Tanjung Pinang residents, such practices occur even before they reach the international border. Opportunities to cross the border have contracted not only because the Singapore government has tightened its immigration controls but because of the dramatic change in the exchange rate, and the ever-widening gap in lifestyle, makes travel unaffordable.<sup>17</sup> Although many Bintan Islanders have no desire to visit Singapore, respondents who do wish to cross the border indicated that they feel that there are no longer the same opportunities to do so. For Rizal, who has never been to Singapore, the drop in the value of the rupiah means his desire to do so is unattainable:

I'd really like to go to Singapore to see my mother's family, but I'd need a lot of money to make the trip because our money isn't worth anything. If I took my money to Singapore, I couldn't do anything. But I'd still like to go there (Interview, July 2005).

Even those who have been to Singapore in the past are unsure whether they will ever be able to travel there again. For Bahruddin, who once ‘went to Singapore because [he] wanted to really experience what [he’d] seen on TV’, a second visit is unlikely:

It’s much harder now. It’s okay for Singaporeans because their economy is much better than ours, but it’s really difficult for Indonesians, especially people from Tanjung Pinang, to go to Singapore because the exchange rate is so bad. So even if we really want to go to Singapore now, we simply can’t (Interview, July 2005).

For Rizal and Bahruddin, economic downturn coupled with increasing border security, further entrenches the processes of enclosure. This increasing enclosure was felt keenly by many of our respondents, regardless of whether they personally have a desire to visit Singapore. These processes are qualitatively different from the past. While Tanjung Pinang has always been sensitive to the dollar economy, the growing strength of the Singaporean currency and Bintan’s almost complete incorporation into the rupiah-based national economy, has made the economic border more tangible.

In contrast, for Singaporeans, who have always occupied the dominant position in the IMS-GT, the economic crisis simply shored up that dominance. The dramatic fall in relative cost of goods and services obtained in the Riau islands meant that Singaporeans’ capacity to move in and out of the islands actually increased.<sup>18</sup> Our respondents are acutely aware of the implications of this disparity:

The crisis was no problem for Singaporeans. They are better off because the exchange rate is better for them. Even if they come to Tanjung Pinang with only a few dollars, they can go

shopping, stay in a flash hotel, and enjoy luxurious facilities (Interview with Abdullah, July 2005).

In other words, as Ilham remarked, ‘The crisis has had exactly the opposite effect on Singaporeans. Their purchasing power just keeps growing, so now they can buy anything they want.’ (Interview, July 2005).

Our respondents suggest that nowadays Bintan Islanders see themselves as qualitatively different to Singaporeans. They argue that in the past, Riau’s maritime economy facilitated ease of movement between Bintan and Singapore and forged a stronger sense of shared history and identity.<sup>19</sup> Communities on both islands were linked by familial relations and commercial transactions. Mobility between Tanjung Pinang and Singapore was a key element in Bintan’s economic prosperity and its people’s wellbeing. During the 1960s-70s, acts of nation-building (such as Confrontation and the need for passports) provided unwelcome short-term interruptions to the Riau Islands ‘way of life’. The IMS-GT promised to strengthen and build on these historical ties by undermining the artificial national borders that divided the Straits.

However, growing economic disparity and hardening borders have become the reality of the growth triangle. While many older Riau Islanders that we spoke to continue to harbour nostalgic memories about the ease of movement of people and goods between Bintan and Singapore, most of the younger people we interviewed see the IMS-GT as one part of a larger process that seeks to inscribe their place within the Indonesian nation. As Tanjung Pinang has been increasingly drawn into the national economy, and as the border between Singapore and Indonesia becomes less permeable, its residents’ identities as national citizens (Indonesians) replace more fluid constructions of identity based on place and location. The national education system (Faucher



2004) and the national media have played a significant role in the making of these new national citizens. The increasing presence of ‘cashed-up’ Singaporeans in the islands further acts to demarcate these boundaries. The qualitative differences between Singaporeans and local Islanders also works to undermine the myth of a shared past and common regional identity shared by communities in the Straits.<sup>20</sup> The international border thus marks not only a geopolitical division between states, but divides the ‘first’ world from the ‘third’ world; ‘modernity’ from ‘backwardness’; and the ‘haves’ from the ‘have nots’.

### **Internal borders**

The bordering practices associated with the growth triangle do not simply begin and end along the edges of the Singapore-Indonesia border. The nature of development under the IMS-GT has meant that such practices have been replicated within the Riau Islands as well. In short, the IMS-GT has not only worked to strengthen the meaning and significance of the international border, it has had the effect of creating multiple internal boundaries within the border zone. Residents of Tanjung Pinang have found that their opportunities for movement within and between the Riau Islands have been impacted by development policies initiated ‘elsewhere’ – in Singapore, Jakarta and/or Batam. These policies, and the boundaries they create, further cement the processes of enclosure which characterise Tanjung Pinang’s experience of the growth triangle. In this section we examine the ways in which residents of Bintan Island have become defined, and their locations enforced, through different development programs initiated as part of the IMS-GT. This analysis brings into sharp relief the multiple realities of the growth triangle, and the different circumstances of communities living throughout the Riau Archipelago.

People living in Tanjung Pinang and Batam have had a very different experience of the IMS-GT because of their history and the nature of their communities, and because of the uneven impact of the IMS-GT itself. Whereas Batam was essentially uninhabited except for a few fishing villages and farming communities, Tanjung Pinang has a long history as an important centre for trading and administration. Pulau Penyengat, an island in the bay of Tanjung Pinang, was the centre of an important pre-colonial dynasty. Tanjung Pinang was also the capital of the Dutch Residency of Riau and its Dependencies from 1911, and later the administrative centre from which the Dutch controlled a considerable section of the East Sumatran coastline (Wee and Chou 1997). Although Tanjung Pinang was ruled from Singapore during the Japanese occupation, and became part of the province of Central Sumatra after Independence, its status was briefly renewed when it became the capital of the newly formed Riau province in 1958. The provincial capital was moved to Pekanbaru on the Sumatran mainland in the early 1960s, but Tanjung Pinang remained the main administrative centre in Insular Riau throughout the remainder of second half of the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

Since Batam presented the Indonesian state and its Singaporean counterparts with an essentially blank canvass, it is not surprising that the growth triangle initiative primarily focused on facilitating Singapore's direct foreign investment there. Under the stewardship of the Jakarta-controlled Batam Industrial Development Authority (BIDA), Batam underwent a dramatic transformation, which included the development of large-scale industrial parks, tourist resorts and administrative infrastructure. In contrast to Batam, where BIDA's Master Plan encompassed the entire island, in Bintan the smaller scale manufacturing and tourism projects that have been developed under the banner of the IMS-GT are effectively quarantined from the existing population centres on the island. Batam's tax-free status also meant that goods could not legally flow from Batam to other parts of Indonesia, thus reinforcing the boundaries between Batam and other Riau Islands. At various times since the establishment of the IMS-GT, the Indonesian government has attempted to

regulate the flow of people from other parts of Indonesia into Batam – sometimes even from neighbouring islands such as Bintan (see Lindquist 2002). Tanjung Pinang residents who travel to Batam in search of work in the factory zones have found themselves disadvantaged by a system of recruitment that operates on networks based in Java and the Sumatran mainland, resulting in lesser access to jobs for local Islanders as well as poorer wages and conditions.<sup>22</sup> These practices restrict their access to economic opportunities and compound the processes of enclosure that restrict their movements within the Straits.

In our many interactions with people living in Tanjung Pinang we were left with the impression that people keenly feel the difference between the level of development in Batam and Bintan, which they blame primarily on Batam's closer proximity to Singapore. According to Ghazali, a young Malay who works in the tourist industry, the problem is that:

We've always lagged behind Batam. Singaporeans can go back and forward to Batam in a single day, but Tanjung Pinang is just that bit too far. You can see Batam from Singapore, and it's very close. It takes longer to get to Tanjung Pinang (Interview, July 2005).

Yet despite their peripheral location in the IMS-GT, at first our respondents were optimistic about the benefits it could bring. As a long-term resident who originally came from the gas-rich island of Natuna commented, 'We really hoped that Sijori<sup>23</sup> would become a locomotive that would drive us to realise the full potential of the islands. We're in such a strategic geographic position here, on the border with Singapore and Malaysia.' (Interview, July 2005). Many of the people we spoke to in Tanjung Pinang also saw the formation of the IMS-GT as a long-overdue gesture of recognition from Indonesia's central government in Jakarta. As Bahruddin, a forty-six year old civil servant noted, 'before Sijori, the New Order took no notice of Kepri, but things started to change with the

signing of the agreement with Singapore' (Interview, July 2005). This view that Indonesia's involvement in the growth triangle was a sign of the central government's desire to develop the economy was shared by other local civil servants. They had a strong expectation that under the IMS-GT Tanjung Pinang would become a prosperous industrial area.

However, the 'realities' of the IMS-GT soon became obvious. Although most people we spoke to recognised that the IMS-GT brought a number of major development projects to Insular Riau, the majority did not feel they had benefited directly from those projects. Abdullah and Bahrudin, the two civil servants, saw the problem as one of access and distribution rather than a total failure of the IMS-GT initiatives. According to Abdullah:

We hoped that the promise of Sijori would be realised, become reality. We hoped that the economic situation would improve in Tanjung Pinang, but really only a tiny proportion of the investment has come to Bintan in areas like Lobam [industrial estate] and Lagoi [the tourist area on the north of Bintan Island]. We've gotten some benefit from that – it's increased our foreign earnings, which means we have more money to encourage local development – but not as much as we'd hoped (Interview July, 2005).

Bahrudin was even more damning in his critique of the IMS-GT:

After the Sijori agreement was signed, Lagoi and Lobam were developed. The trouble is none of this has helped us. The goods made in Lobam go straight to Singapore, and not many locals are employed there. And we can't really access the facilities at Lagoi – they're designed especially for overseas tourists. Besides the cost, there are rules about who can go in. So I don't really see what we've gotten out of it all (Interview, July 2005).

The bonded zone of Lobam is located a long distance away from the town of Tanjung Pinang. The zone's protected tax status is maintained by strict control of entry and exit points. By land, Lobam is accessible by one narrow road at the end of which is a security gate and perimeter fence. Goods and commodities enter and leave the bonded zone through a special shipping terminal that provides a direct route to and from Singapore. Unfinished products arrive by ship from Singapore and are then processed by cheap Indonesian labour before being returned to Singapore for international distribution. Few residents of Bintan Island have found employment in the industrial zone. Like many bonded factory zones throughout Southeast Asia, its workforce is largely comprised of young, single women who live on-site in dormitory style housing. The women are mostly recruited from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago on short-term contracts. For Bintan Islanders, Lobam is a 'space apart'. Its workforce is transient and has few ties to the local community, and its manufacturing output has little impact on the local economy. A flagship of Bintan's involvement in the IMS-GT, in reality it is a symbol of the extent to which Bintan Islanders have been 'left behind' by the growth triangle. Its status as a tax-free zone also represents the encroachment of Singapore's economic border into Indonesia and the increasing 'fixedness' of Bintan Islanders on the 'outer limits' of economic development policy.

The tourist enclave at Lagoi is an even more dramatic example of the ways in which Bintan Islanders have been excluded by the economic boundaries of the IMS-GT. Lagoi is a gated community occupying 23,000 hectares, or approximately one-third of the size of Singapore. Leased to the Bintan Resort Development Corporation (BRDC) in 1990, the resort zone contains hotel complexes owned largely by Singaporean interests. Tourists enter the resort zone through a ferry terminal owned and operated by the BRDC and accessible only to ferries operating from the Tanah Merah Terminal in Singapore. Inter-island ferry travel from within Indonesia to the resort zone is

extremely rare. Furthermore, land access is limited to one road from Tanjung Pinang to the south. The road is narrow and some sections are in poor condition. Vehicles which reach the end of the road from Tanjung Pinang (approximately one hour away) are confronted with barbed wire across the road way and a large security check post staffed by armed guards. If the resorts are quiet, local people are allowed to pass; however if the resorts are busy, only individuals with recognised business within the resort zone (e.g. resort staff who live in the nearby town of Tanjung Uban) are permitted entry. Once inside the resort zone vehicles must then travel up to another 40 minutes before arriving at individual resorts. The gates to these resorts are often closed and always staffed by armed security guards. For local Bintan Island residents the resorts in Lagoi are ‘out-of-bounds’; the gates and security guards are clearly there to keep locals out. At the same time, while the gates effectively keep the tourists in, their symbolic value is much less apparent. The fences of the wider perimeter are not visible from the resort hotels which hug the northern coastline, and the nature of beach resort tourism is such that most tourists have little inclination to venture beyond their hotel pool or beach, even if transport were more readily available.

The process of marking the resorts as a space ‘apart’ from the rest of Bintan Island extends beyond the physical enclosure of the land. Within the resort zone, the physical landscape, architecture, food, and leisure activities have been chosen to reflect a pan-Asia-Pacific beach resort experience. Not only are the resorts stripped of their cultural referents to Bintan or Insular Riau, but in some cases to Indonesia as well. In the words of the Singaporean tourists who frequent the resorts, they could be ‘anywhere’ and perhaps even ‘in Singapore’. For residents of Tanjung Pinang, the ‘foreignness’ of Lagoi is heightened by the difficulties they face in finding employment within the resort zone. Jobs in the hotels are largely taken up by Indonesian migrant workers from Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java and Bali. Trained in the hospitality industry in other parts of Indonesia, many of these workers moved to Bintan in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis and more recently the Bali

bombings. Job recruiters for the resort zone often source their staff through hotel chains elsewhere, and without access to hotel and hospitality training facilities, local islanders have few opportunities to find employment. In this example, the flows of transnational capital and Indonesian labour further work to limit local islander opportunities and restricts not only physical movement but also socio-economic mobility. The gates and fences that separate Lagoi and Lobam from the rest of the island are thus symbolic of the wider exclusion of Bintan Islanders from participation in the IMS-GT.

While local people have been excluded from the luxury resort zone at Lagoi and the bonded manufacturing zone of Lobam, they have not been totally immune to the economic advantages of the IMS-GT. The main economic benefit of the growth triangle has been felt through a sharp rise in working-class tourism to Tanjung Pinang. Some of the visitors came to see family, to buy cheap goods, or to visit places of which they had fond memories from trips to the islands in their youth. However, most working-class men came in search of sex, gambling, cheap alcohol and drugs. As Rizal, a forty year old civil servant observed, the expansion of these 'sin' industries brought a boom in the local economy:

Many Singaporeans came here in the 1990s. They brought their dollars with them, which meant that local people could easily make a good living. The hotels were full, so hotel workers had plenty of income, as of course did the traders. Even the *tukang ojek* [motorcycle taxis] got their share working at the ports. People from other parts of Indonesia flooded here because they thought there'd be lots of opportunities. There were so many Singaporeans at that time! (Interview, July 2005).

But tourism, like many other aspects of Singaporean involvement in Tanjung Pinang, proved to be unreliable. Although the Riau Islands initially escaped the effects of the Asian Financial Crisis because of the buffer provided by the tourism industry, Tanjung Pinang's honeymoon with Singaporean tourists did not last. The town's reliance on the tourism industry further entrenched its marginal position with the IMS-GT and reinforced its inability to control the pace and direction of future economic and social development. The processes of enclosure that restricted Tanjung Pinang's access to more sustainable and morally acceptable forms of development, strengthened its attraction for the sex tourism industry. The physical barriers at Lagoi and Lobam quarantined the Indonesian workforce and Singaporean tourists alike from the vice industries elsewhere on the island, and the lack of access to alternative employment opportunities provided a ready-made workforce for sex tourism to thrive in Tanjung Pinang.

Tanjung Pinang's susceptibility to the vicissitudes of the IMS-GT became even more marked as Insular Riau's relative prosperity became a magnet for people in other parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Tanjung Pinang (along with Batam) experienced a sudden influx of internal migrants. People flocked to Tanjung Pinang because, in Rizal's words, 'The crisis wasn't as bad as it could have been, because we are close to other countries. You can always do something here. People come from elsewhere with just a handcart and they can make a living.' (Interview, July 2005). But the local economy could not absorb all the migrants. As the population increased, opportunities for employment were reduced. High internal migration, and the subsequent high levels of unemployment, threatened the very industry in which the migrants hoped to find work. Some local residents also blamed the sudden influx of internal migrants for driving the tourists away:



Before Tanjung Pinang became really crowded, Singaporeans could come here and really enjoy themselves. Now there's a lot of gangsterism (*premanisme*) in Tanjung Pinang so they don't feel safe anymore (Interview with Afrizal, July 2005).<sup>24</sup>

As Tanjung Pinang became absorbed into a cycle of more intense internal migration, residents saw their way of life changing and felt powerless to control the change. These new migrants are markedly different to earlier waves of migrants. Tanjung Pinang's major migrant communities were well-established by the 1970s (Sobary and Foulcher 1987), and have become closely integrated into the Tanjung Pinang community. The people who came to Tanjung Pinang stayed, and most Tanjung Pinang-born children of migrants who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s speak Malay as their first language and consider themselves to be *orang Tanjung Pinang* (Tanjung Pinang people) first and foremost (see Ford 2003).<sup>25</sup> As the result of its long-standing status as an urban centre, and the relative cohesiveness of this community, Tanjung Pinang has far less of what Lindquist calls Batam's 'distinct frontier-town atmosphere' (2002: 12).<sup>26</sup> Prior to the arrival of the recent migrants, few people in Tanjung Pinang called another place 'home' or had a desire to be elsewhere for any more than a short period of time. The growth triangle, however, has challenged this sense of being. In contrast, new arrivals have not assimilated into Riau Islander life by adopting the Malay language and identifying with the Tanjung Pinang as their new 'home'. They are focused on earning an income that they can remit money back to their families 'somewhere else'. These new migrants have much more in common with their counterparts on Batam, which Lindquist notes, is a 'kind of crossroads inhabited by migrants and tourists [where] most people call somewhere else "home", even if they have never been there, and most have plans to go elsewhere' (2002: 41). Ironically, it is these processes of mobility that are most threatening to Tanjung Pinang's way of life. The IMS-GT, instead of building and supporting a stronger sense of community through

economic growth and social stability, has challenged means to be *orang Kepri* or *orang Tanjung Pinang*.<sup>27</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It is clear, then, that the IMS-GT is not an ‘avatar of the “borderless” world’ (Sparke et al, 2004: 486). However, neither does it, as Grundy-Warr et al (1999: 325) suggest, truly represent a ‘form of economic integration without significant loss of national sovereignty’. Despite promises of economic integration under the IMS-GT, the Singapore-Insular Riau borderlands do not represent an abandonment of national boundaries: as Lindquist (2002: 18) indicates, it is inaccurate to describe the growth triangle as a ‘post-national arena’, because while Singaporeans, along with Singaporean capital, flow freely into Indonesian territory, the converse is far from true. The meanings and significance of the national border for a sense of local and national identity have been fluid in the decades since Indonesia gained its Independence. In the immediate post-Independence period, Riau Islanders’ way of life was little changed. Traders and families continued to move back and forth across the Straits to Malaya/Singapore. With Confrontation, the border became more tangible and its role in identifying and keeping the new national citizens of Singapore and Indonesia apart was made apparent for the first time. Restrictions on movement across the border, however, were short-lived and the processes of enclosure that worked to keep the two communities separate were incomplete. Ultimately, it has been economic differences, rather than border controls, that have strengthened the barriers to cross-border movement. Contrary to the expectations of Tanjung Pinang residents interviewed, the IMS-GT rather than breaking down these barriers and re-invigorating a history of regional trade, worked to further entrench their lack of physical and socio-economic mobility.

Although cross-border ties still exist and cross-border interactions still occur, the contemporary border between privileged Singapore (which has no real geographic periphery of its own) and the underprivileged hinterland of the Riau Islands embodies many more discontinuities than continuities. These discontinuities are evident when we compare the experiences of different communities within the Riau Islands. As a result of their different histories, communities in Batam and Bintan have little in common. Under the IMS-GT, despite the promise that Tanjung Pinang would become the site of economic development fuelled by a manufacturing zone and tourism development, residents continue to feel 'left behind' by the scale and pace of development on the nearby island of Batam. While both locations have become places of prostitution, drugs and gambling, even in these industries Tanjung Pinang is susceptible to economies of scale and the seemingly fickle nature of decision-making by Singapore's working class tourists. The processes of enclosure that work to restrict the movement of people from Tanjung Pinang into the enclosed spaces of Lagoi and Lobam, also restrict their access to employment opportunities on Batam. The bordering practices that have come to define Tanjung Pinang's experience of the IMS-GT and the Singaporean-Indonesian international border are replicated within the Riau Islands themselves. What people in both Bintan and Batam share, though, is a sense of ambivalence towards the IMS-GT and its implications for their lives. However, whereas for Batam islanders that ambivalence is part of what Lindquist (2002: 31) describes as the 'anxieties of mobility' (a direct response to their continued identity as temporary migrants), in Tanjung Pinang, a stronger sense of home and belonging has prompted a different set of concerns for the future of their community.

The more established nature of the community in Tanjung Pinang has impacted on the ways in which local people have responded to the IMS-GT project. As our paper has shown, for Island-born and long-term residents of Tanjung Pinang, the IMS-GT promised economic and social development by building on a history of mobility between the Riau Islands, the island state of

Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. Unlike Batam, which has a large transient population whose expectations of mobility are framed by the expectations of 'going home', people in Tanjung Pinang have an historical expectation of mobility between the islands and across the relatively new international border. Contemporary realities of heightened global security concerns and nationally oriented economic growth policies have worked to restrict this movement – whether through stricter cross-border immigration controls or the financial inability to travel. The processes of enclosure extend beyond the geo-political border that separates Indonesian from Singapore. People in Tanjung Pinang increasingly find their physical and socio-economic mobility, as well as their identity and way of life, constrained by the realities of the IMS-GT. Security fences, arbitrary controls on migration flows, the lack of employment and educational opportunities for locals, a reliance on the whims and fancies of Singaporean tourists for daily survival, and dependence on decision-making by Jakarta and Batam-based officials without a vested interest in Tanjung Pinang, all work to restrict the movement of Bintan Islanders. Despite the promises of the IMS-GT, for the *orang Tanjung Pinang* life under the growth triangle is more about enclosure than it is about mobility.

## Bibliography

- Cunningham, Hilary (2004) Nations Rebound? Crossing Borders in a Gated Globe, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (3): 329-50.
- Cunningham, Hilary and Josiah McC. Heyman (2004) Introduction: Mobilities and Enclosures at Borders, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (3): 298-302.
- Faucher, Carole (2004) Educating Identities: Official Rhetoric and Plural Practices in the New Kepri Province, *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-New Order Indonesia Conference*. Jakarta, 20-22 December.
- Ford, Michele (2003) Who are the Orang Riau? Negotiating Identity Across Geographic and Ethnic Divides, In E. Aspinall and G. Fealy (Eds), *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation and Democratisation*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- Gray, J. (2001) Lawlessness on the Frontier: The Anglo-Scottish Borderlands in the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century, *History and Anthropology* 12 (4): 381-408.
- Grundy-Warr, Carl, Karen Peachey and Martin Perry (1999) Fragmented Integration in the Singapore-Indonesian Border Zone: Southeast Asia's 'Growth Triangle' Against the Global Economy, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23 (2): 304-28.
- Grundy-Warr, Carl and Elaine Siew Yin Wong (2002) Geographies of displacement: The Karenni and the Shan across the Myanmar-Thailand border, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 23 (1): 93-122.
- Hart, Gillian (2004) Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism, *Creative Destruction: Area Knowledge and the New Geographies of Empire Conference*. CUNY Graduate Center, New York, April 15-17.

- Horstmann, A. (2004) *Incorporation and Resistance: Borderlands, Transnational Communities and Social Change in Southeast Asia*. Working Paper on Transnational Communities, WPTC-02-04. Available at: [http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working\\_papers.htm](http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working_papers.htm).
- Lindquist, Johan (2002) *The anxieties of mobility: Development, migration, and tourism in the Indonesian borderlands*, Doctoral Thesis. Department of Anthropology, Stockholm University, Stockholm.
- Mack, Jennifer (2004) Inhabiting the Imaginary: Factory Women at Home on Batam Island, Indonesia, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25 (2): 156-79.
- Miller, David and Jasbir Singh (1998) Human smuggling rings target S'pore from Batam and Bintan, *The Straits Times*, 15 March.
- Ohmae, K. (1990) *The borderless world: Power and strategy in the global marketplace*. London: Harper Collins.
- Ohmae, K. (1995) *The end of the nation state: The rise of regional economies*. New York: The Free Press.
- Peachey, Karen, Martin Perry and Carl Grundy-Warr (1998) The Riau Islands and Economic Cooperation in the Singapore-Indonesian Border Zone, *Boundary and Territory Briefing* 2 (3): 1-59.
- Pereira, A. (2004) State Entrepreneurship and Regional Development: Singapore's Industrial Parks in Batam and Suzhou, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 16: 129-44.
- Prasad, Kesavan Sam (2004) Singaporeans open to attack in Bintan, *The Straits Times*, 20 October.
- Shamir, Ronen (2005) Without Borders? Notes on Globalization as a Mobility Regime, *Sociological Theory* 23 (2): 197-217.
- Sidaway, James (2002) Signifying Boundaries: Detours around the Portuguese-Spanish (Algarve/Alentejo-Andalucia) Borderlands, *Geopolitics* 7 (1): 139-64.

- Sobary, Mohamad and Keith Foulcher (1987) *Between 'Ngoyo' and 'Nrimo': Cultural Values and Economic Behaviour among Javanese Migrants in Tanjung Pinang*. Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.
- Sparke, Matthew, James Sidaway, Tim Bunnell and Carl Grundy-Warr (2004) Triangulating the Borderless World: Geographies of Power in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29: 485-98.
- The Straits Times (1998) 12 foreigners nabbed off Changi coast, 25 February.
- The Straits Times (2002) Shock and disbelief at attack so close to home, 15 October.
- Trocki, Carl (1979) *Prince of the pirates: The Temenggongs and the development of Johor and Singapore, 1784-1885*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Trocki, Carl (1990) *Opium and empire*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Van Houtum, Henk and Ton Van Naerssen (2002) Bordering, Ordering and Othering, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 93 (2): 125-36.
- Vijayan, K. C. (2004) 3-nation patrols of strait launched, *The Straits Times*, 21 July.
- Wee, Vivienne (1985) *Melayu: Hierarchies of Being in Riau*, Doctoral Thesis. Australian National University, Canberra.
- Wee, Vivienne (2002) Ethno-nationalism in Process: Atavism, Ethnicity and Indigenism in Riau, *Pacific Review* 15 (4): 497-516.
- Wee, Vivienne and Cynthia Chou (1997) Continuity and Discontinuity in the Multiple Realities of Riau, *Bijdragen Tot de Taal Land en Volkenkunde* 153 (4): 527-41.
- Yeung, Henry Wai-Chung (1998) The political economy of transnational corporations: a study of the regionalization of Singaporean firms, *Political Geography* 17 (4): 389-416.

---

<sup>1</sup> The research on which this paper is based was funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project grant *In the Shadow of Singapore: The Limits of Transnationalism in Insular Riau* (DP0557368) – see project website <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/research/intheshadow/>. We are grateful to the three anonymous reviewers for their comments on this paper. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *Asia Horizons: Cities, States and Societies Conference, Singapore*, 1-3 August 2005. We thank the organisers of the conference for their financial support and members of the audience for their comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> This study opens the way for similar studies to be carried out in other communities in the Riau Islands, where local people's experiences of the IMS-GT are different yet again.

<sup>3</sup> The study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in Tanjung Pinang in 2002, 2004 and 2005. We would like to acknowledge Hambali for his assistance with 20 in-depth fieldwork interviews in July 2005. Respondents were selected on the basis of their length of stay in Tanjung Pinang (all respondents were Tanjung Pinang-born or long-term residents) and on the basis of class (the group was divided more or less equally into middle class and working class respondents). An attempt was made to achieve gender balance; however, approximately three quarters of all respondents were male. On the importance of narratives in the study of borderlands, see also Sidaway (2002)

<sup>4</sup> While our usage of the term 'enclosure' clearly draws on the Marx's theory of accumulation by dispossession (made evident in the enclosure movements of Great Britain) and more recent struggles over displacement and privatisation (see Hart 2004), in this paper we use it to refer specifically to those political, social and cultural processes that restrict access to movement across borders. Some indigenous Malays and the *Orang Laut* (nomadic fisher people) have certainly been dispossessed of their land and waterways as a result of the IMS-GT, and ongoing land claims continue to be pursued by small groups of former landholders in both Batam and Bintan. These struggles, however, remain outside the scope of this paper. The significant role of the Batamindo Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) and the central Indonesian government in development planning in the islands also gives rise to important questions about the intersection between state and private interests. This issue too is outside the scope of this paper, but is an integral part of our wider study (see Endnote 1).

<sup>5</sup> *Zaman Dollar* (The Era of the Dollar) is a term often used in Tanjung Pinang to refer to the period before Confrontation (the military confrontation and associated low-level skirmishes between Indonesia and the Malay Federation that took place in 1963).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed history of the concept of 'Riau', see Wee (1985)



---

<sup>7</sup> For discussions of some of the broader issues concerning borderlands in Southeast Asia see Horstmann (2004) and Grundy-Warr and Wong (2002)

<sup>8</sup> In their critique of the IMS-GT Grundy-Warr et al (1999: 321) argue that Singapore and Insular Riau ‘lack...any deep pre-existing local-level linkages’. Our research suggests that while this observation may be accurate for many Singaporeans, it does not hold true for residents of Tanjung Pinang.

<sup>9</sup> Wee’s respondents also reported that they had far better access to imported goods than the rest of Indonesia at this time. According to Lindquist (2002), Riau Islanders probably also consumed sexual services in Singapore.

<sup>10</sup> Kepri is a widely used abbreviation for ‘Kepulauan Riau’. It is commonly used to describe the islands, and now the province bearing the same name.

<sup>11</sup> For accounts of Confrontation and its effects in Insular Riau, see Wee (1985) and Lindquist (2002)

<sup>12</sup> Our respondents indicated that during this time they identified more strongly with Singapore than they did with either the Sumatran mainland, or Jakarta many thousands of kilometres away. The use of the Singapore dollar for everyday trading and the continued culture of smuggling meant that in contrast to most Indonesian rural communities at that time, many residents of Tanjung Pinang had access to television sets (watching Singapore channels) and a range of electronic goods. They told us that the life they saw on Singaporean television was not that different to their own.

<sup>13</sup> For details of major IMS-GT projects, see Peachey et al. (1998) and Pereira (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Abdullah here refers to the Singapore dollar. In other parts of Indonesia, the economy is not sensitive to the Singapore dollar but rather to the US dollar.

<sup>15</sup> Indonesians living in areas included in growth triangles do not have to pay the hefty exit tax (*fiskal*) imposed by the Indonesian government on its citizens.

<sup>16</sup> In an effort to educate local Singaporeans about the dangers posed by these ‘illegals’, the main English daily, *The Straits Times*, also ran extensive coverage on illegal entrants to Singapore. Local Singaporeans were warned about the dangers of large numbers of unskilled Indonesian migrants entering Singapore and were urged to be vigilant in order to protect the island city (Miller and Singh 1998). They were told that as a nation, Singaporeans had to ‘grow calluses on their heart’ when confronted with the plight of Indonesia’s poor.

<sup>17</sup> The people we spoke to constantly referred to the fact that life is very different in Singapore, both economically and socially. In the words of Abdullah, ‘Singaporeans are amazing. From the perspective of their economic structure, their social status, their lives are far more stable and prosperous than Indonesians, especially people living in Tanjung Pinang.’ (Interview, July 2005).

---

<sup>18</sup> Movement across the border from Singapore has also been affected by recent events. The economic downturn in Singapore has reduced the spending power of the working class and caused a decline in some segments of the tourism industry. The Bali Bombings have served as a local reference point for concerns about Islamic terrorism in the region and the safety of Singaporeans travelling in an increasingly unruly Indonesia. In one article soon after the bombing, a Singaporean was reported as saying: ‘I was extremely shocked. It really rattles one because Bali is only three-four hours away. What’s next? Bintan?’ (The Straits Times 2002). The arrest of Mas Selamat, leader of the Singapore branch of the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) network, in Tanjung Pinang in early 2003 brought these fears close to home. In a more recent letter to the Forum pages of *The Straits Times*, a Singaporean likened the situation of Singaporeans travelling to the Riau Islands to Australian’s travelling to Bali: ‘Singapore can be made into a fortress but Bintan may be the soft target. I do not wish to sound like an alarmist but something must be done before it is too late’ (Prasad 2004).

<sup>19</sup> This romanticisation of the past was a common theme in our discussions with residents of all ages. See Wee (1985) for a discussion of the problems associated with this characterization of shared identity.

<sup>20</sup> Our research with Singaporeans also reinforces this view. Singaporean Malays told us that they saw themselves as qualitatively different to Riau Islanders, despite shared language, religion and culture.

<sup>21</sup> There was considerable debate about whether the provincial capital should be in Tanjung Pinang or Batam.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Local hires’ are offered lower wages than workers recruited from other parts of Indonesia, and are often the first to be retrenched when there is a downturn in production.

<sup>23</sup> An earlier term used to denote the IMS-GT based on the first two letters of each regional partner (Singapore-Johor-Riau). It is in much more common usage in Riau than in Singapore.

<sup>24</sup> It is widely believed by local residents that Singaporeans now prefer to go to Batam or Tanjung Balai rather than to Tanjung Pinang because of the rise in pickpocketing and other crimes. Some locals also saw the drop in tourists as a reflection of Singaporeans’ greater access to mobility within the IMS-GT. Ali said: “We used to be the favourites. Tourists always wanted to come here, especially for sex. Sex was easy to get, and we had all the facilities: good cheap hotels, and all the rest. But then we started to have problems, and tourists didn’t want to come here anymore. Now they all want to go to Tanjung Balai because they feel comfortable there. They can get off the ferry and do what they need to do without getting hassled all the time” (Interview, December 2004). In contrast, Rizal – perhaps because of his own very direct family connections to Singapore – understands this as the product of an economic problem within Singapore itself: ‘After the crisis hit, the numbers of Singaporeans coming here dropped. Now the hotels are quiet, and the money has dried up. The numbers of Singaporeans who come here are much lower than in the 1990s. Maybe it’s because their

---

economy was also affected [by the crisis], so where before they had plenty of time to go places, to contact friends, maybe now they have to spend their time working.' (Interview, July 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Wee (1985, 2002) predicates 'localness' in the islands on being Malay; however, Malays are not the only groups who make claims to place in Tanjung Pinang.

<sup>26</sup> On the historical importance of frontiers, see for example Gray (2001).

<sup>27</sup> Literally: A person from Riau or a person from Tanjung Pinang.