

1 Introduction

Philippine labor migration appears in very different contexts one surely would not expect. Even the 2022 FIFA World Cup is closely connected to international labor migration from the Philippines. In the introduction, I will first point to the relevance of Philippine migration in the context of a globalized economy and the significance of migration for the Philippine state. Afterwards, I will explain what made me select this topic and present my particular research questions centering on international labor migration as a way of life in the Philippines. In the following literature review, I will discuss the current state of research on Philippine labor migration. An outline of the book will summarize the main ideas of each chapter.

1.1 What the World Cup has to do with Philippine Migration

Labor migration in the globalized economy is an issue which has a shadowy existence in the public media. However, it came to public attention in 2013, when the miserable conditions of South and Southeast Asian construction workers at the 2022 FIFA World Cup construction sites in Qatar were put in the public eye. The scales of abuse included lower salaries than promised, pay which was withheld for months, excessive working hours, insufficient health and safety conditions, and squalid accommodations (Amnesty International 2013: 6). The discussion was caused by an article in the British daily 'The Guardian', according to which, within two months, 44 Nepali workers died of heart attacks and work accidents at the construction sites in Qatar. Whether Qatar is a legitimate host for the World Cup, considering its violations of human rights, is still being hotly debated. Among the workers at the 2022 World Cup construction sites are also workers from the Philippines.

The Philippines has a long history of migration. However, international labor migration has been organized on a large scale by the Philippine government since the 1970s and differs from former migration patterns in term of scope, professions practiced and countries of destination. It is closely connected to the restructuring of the world

economy which has been taking place since the 1970s. Whereas the oil crisis of 1973 negatively impacted Western economies, oil exporting countries in the Middle East were able to benefit from higher oil revenues. They recruited workers from South and Southeast Asia as construction workers for large infrastructure projects. Moreover, the 'newly emerging economies' of Asia intensified trade with oil exporting countries and were also in need of foreign workers, many of which came from the Philippines. West Asian and East Asian countries encourage contractual labor migration which is temporal and circular. The 'feminization of migration' became a new pattern of this globalized economy, driven by the global demand for cheaper female migrant workers in production sites and as domestic workers in private households. Despite the open critique of the World Cup construction sites in Qatar, the situation of domestic workers in private households in the Gulf States is still kept silent.

On a global scale, the Philippines is one of the largest sending countries for contract workers. The state-sponsored sending of migrant workers from the Philippines began in 1974, when former president Ferdinand Marcos initiated a labor export program in order to counter increasing unemployment and economic downturn. The program was designed to be a temporary solution but has now become a stable condition backed by a migration industry of private recruiters, NGOs and government institutions. One government institution is the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) which facilitates the technical aspects of employment. It regulates the work of private recruitment agencies, attempts to solicit potential foreign employers, and facilitates the sending of migrants. The government even coined the term OFW, for Overseas Filipino Workers⁵, which is now used also in everyday parlance.

Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s the state solely addressed the issue of labor export, more recent protest from NGOs and the public has been a reason for the state to begin addressing the issue of migrant rights

⁵ The common acronym for migrant workers was OCW (Overseas Contract Worker). In deference to Filipino workers, the former President Fidel Ramos coined the term Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) in the 1990s. Compared to OCW, the term OFW has a nationalistic connotation. Nowadays, OFW has replaced OCW in everyday language.

as well. Consequently, in 1995, the Republic Act 8042 (also called the Magna Carta of Overseas Filipinos) was legislated. According to this act, the protection of migrant workers and the promotion of their welfare is a priority for the Philippine government (Chin 2003: 323). The POEA and the Republic Act 8042 are just two among many examples of an institutionalization of migration in the Philippines. As a result of the institutionalization of migration, the Philippines is seen as the “prototype of a labour exporting country” (Semyonov/Gorodzeisky 2005: 47). The export of labor has made the Philippine economy largely dependent on the remittances of its workers. In 2011, the Philippines ranked fourth in the world in the sending of remittances in absolute numbers. Remittances account for around 12 % of the GDP (WB 2011: 13-14). Within the last nine years, remittances nearly tripled from 7.8 Billion US Dollar to 21.4 Billion US Dollar (BSP 2013). Remittances are one of the reasons why the Philippines was not hit as hard by the Asian Crisis and the Global Financial Crisis as its neighbouring countries. In 2012, the number of workers with processed contracts peaked to 2.1 Million (POEA 2013a) which means that around 5,700 workers were leaving the country every day. Around 10% of the Philippine population now lives and works abroad.

1.2 Personal Interest and Research Questions

My interest in the topic of migration arose through my friendship with Joan and her life story in the years that we have known each other. We first met in 2002 when I took a gap year after graduating from school and before starting university. During that year, I did volunteer work in the Philippines for six months. Joan is two years older than me and since Filipinos graduate much earlier from college than Germans, she already had some work experience in her field of marine biology. A year and a half after we met, she gave birth to her daughter as a single mum. Unfortunately, she had difficulties sustaining herself and her daughter in the Philippines, and was financially dependent on her family. Since her younger sister had found work in the UAE, Joan followed her hoping to support her own family. Her two year old daughter stayed behind with her great grandmother. When Joan worked in the UAE, I

was about to finish my master's degree (*Magister*) in Sociology, Cultural Anthropology and Political Science, with a regional focus on Southeast Asia. I had learned that Joan's migration was not random, but rather found its roots in global inequality. Moreover, I discovered that around 10% of the Filipino population was living and working abroad. Joan's choice of the UAE as her destination was not by chance either, as it is one of the main destination countries for migrants from South and Southeast Asia. Wanting to learn more about Filipino migration, I decided to write my master's thesis on the topic of Filipino migration to the UAE. I was surprised to learn that what Joan earned in the UAE was not more than what she would have earned back home in the Philippines. It is this particular mystery (at least it was a mystery from my point of view) – of why Joan and other Filipino migrants go to the UAE, leaving their family behind, even though their earnings do not exceed the salary they would make back home – which accompanied me during for this book as well.

After Joan returned to the Philippines, although she was reunited with her daughter, she did not find work immediately and her financial situation was not improved as a result of her migration to the UAE. Her personal situation as a return migrant prompted me once again to question Philippine labor migration and the experiences of return migrants. Therefore, I decided to write my book on Philippine return migration. When I returned to the Philippines for my field work however, I was struck by the prevalence of migration in the various aspects of daily life; migration seemed to permeate everyday life in the Philippines. For example, when I rode a bus, a sticker on the seat in front of me advertised work abroad. Large tarpaulins on the roads called for enrollment in caregiver courses which are considered a stepping stone occupation for work in countries such as Israel or Canada.

Figure 2: Omnipresence of Migration in the Public Space



Source: by author.

Many of the friends I had known since my first visit to the Philippines considered migration to be a viable option. My friend Aileen, for example, was encouraged to enroll in a nursing program by her family so that after graduating she would be able to go abroad and support her siblings financially. When we met again, she had already graduated and was frustrated from looking for work in the Philippines as a nurse. Due to the large number of nurses in the Philippines, the salary for nurses is very low. It is for this reason that Aileen mandated a recruitment agency to find her employment in Brunei (field notes 07-10-09). While in Manila, I stayed in the house of Aileen's brother-in-law, Jeffrey, also a friend of mine from my first visit to the Philippines. In contrast to the years before however, I was not able to meet him in person since he, his partner and their son, had immigrated to Canada. A few days after my arrival in the Philippines, I joined Aileen when she visited her other sister in Bulacan. While driving to Bulacan, the radio broadcasted an advertisement for work as a domestic worker abroad. Aileen's other brother-in-law worked in China as an engineer, while

his wife had just finished her six-month care giving course and hoped to find work in Canada (field notes 07-15-09). I was impressed to be confronted with the topic of migration nearly everywhere. I understood that from the Filipino point of view, topics such as the separation of family members across geographic borders were crucial issues. Apart questions concerning the subjective accounts of return migration, an increasing number of questions arose while I was carrying out my field research.

I wondered about an NGO member who attempted to persuade the people in her community not to go abroad, but who went abroad herself. An employee of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) – an organization mandated to facilitate labor migration of Filipinos – told me that she would not migrate herself from fear that migration would have a negative impact on her family. Therefore, I was surprised to learn that migration for the sake of the family was mentioned as the main motive for going abroad but also, at the same time, for the return of migrants. I also wondered why migrants told me that they went abroad in order to finance their children's (college) education but did not seem to be bothered by the fact that their children worked abroad in low skill jobs after graduation. Another mystery for me was that during the global financial crisis of 2008-09, economists predicted a decrease in remittances due to an increase in worker dismissals, including migrant workers, yet the opposite was the case: remittances from OFWs in 2009 set a new record! With the experience I gained from my field work in Dubai, I continued to wonder why Filipinos carried on working abroad despite abusive working conditions, cases of illegal recruitment, and low salaries. Although the news on television in the Philippines was full of such information, Filipinos were not discouraged from looking for work abroad. All these questions are probably very clear in the mind of Filipinos, but for an outsider, these were the questions and ambivalences which I struggled to understand. In order to grasp these issues, an anthropological approach – with its focus on the emic view⁶ – is necessary. These questions demand a focus on culture and society. I understood that to look behind these 'mysteries' and ambivalences, I could not merely examine one particular aspect, but would have to integrate and to interrelate different components of

⁶ Emic view = a view from the inside.

culture: what anthropologists call “holism”. My initial ‘puzzles’ finally resulted in the following complex research questions:

- What are the local meanings and legitimacies of migration?

I wanted to study how Filipinos understand the fact of going abroad and why they leave despite of the hardships they may face in the destination countries. I also hoped to uncover whether any particular local concepts existed which could describe the phenomenon of migration. I came across the concept of sacrifice which is rooted in the Philippine Catholic context. Migration is considered to be a sacrifice for the family and thus helps to legitimize working abroad.

- How does migration relate to concepts of family life and gender?

The effect of migration on the family is an issue which many Filipinos worry about. They assume that the geographical separation of families will lead to estrangement within the family, to philandering husbands and to an increase in the number of school drop-outs due to a lack of guidance on the parents’ part. Are these concerns also an ethnographic reality or do they merely mirror cultural perceptions of a ‘correct’ family life? Much literature centers on the perspective of female migrants and their practice of transnational mothering (Lan 2006a, Lutz 2008, Parreñas 2003, Hondagneu-Sotelo/Avila 2006, Fresnoza-Flot 2009), whereas only a few studies have taken the perspective of children into account (Parreñas 2005, Asis SMC/ECMI-CBCP/AOS/OWWA 2004). In what manner do children perceive the absence of their parents? Moreover, the feminization of migration challenges the established gender norms of the mother as the nurturer and the father as the provider of the family. An increasing number of mothers leave their families in the Philippines in order to provide for them by working abroad. Does this development lead to a reconceptualization of gender norms?

- How are social class and social mobility connected to migration?

It soon became obvious that many Filipinos considered migration to be the way to a better life and to financial stability in particular. It is a means to upward social mobility which enables them to gain a middle-class status. However, since many migrants already have middle class status, it remains unclear why they see the need to go abroad in the first place. And what happens in cases where the expected financial reward for migration fails to materialize? Is it migration in itself which leads to a higher social status?

- How do return migrants experience their often temporary return? Before entering the field, I considered return migration to be a final process from the destination country back to the Philippines. Yet I discovered that many return migrants who had planned to come home for good finally decided to seek work abroad again: their return to the home country being rather temporary in the end. What are the subjective accounts of return migrants? How do they perceive their economic and social reintegration into society? Why do they sometimes consider returning abroad? And what is the social status of these returnees?

Each of these research questions could be a possible dissertation topic in itself. When presenting my dissertation topic, I was often given the advice to narrow down my research question as opposed to further broadening it. My approach on the issue is different however: I wish to stress the interrelated aspects of culture instead of studying merely one component while omitting other related aspects. In studying the implications of migration on family life, for example, I must consider gender norms as well. In order to understand why return migrants return abroad, the local meanings of migration, the concept of 'good life', and social mobility need to be understood. In order to comprehensively answer my research questions, I do not only rely on my own data, but also complement it with the findings from other empirical studies.

The main hypothesis for my book is that international labor migration has become a way of life in the Philippines. An anthropological approach helps to understand how migration permeates the different spheres of life which will be linked holistically and systemically in my dissertation. The Philippines can therefore be characterized as a culture of migration. The concept of 'culture' will be approached from the perspective of cultural anthropology where 'culture' is understood as a way of life. In order to avoid the trap of seeing culture as a closed system – in that all members of a culture share the same customs, economic system, and religious beliefs for instance – culture will be portrayed as a common set of expectations and familiarity shared by members of a group.

Interpreting international labor migration as a way of life in the Philippines does not mean that every Filipino goes abroad; instead I am acting on the assumption that Filipinos share common ideas about migration, for example their positive connotation of migration resulting in a better life. Even though my field work was based in a region

of a high out-migration, I decided to include the adjective 'Philippine' culture of migration because of the nation-wide significance of international labor migration. A Philippine sociologist with whom I discussed my hypothesis, told me: "It [migration] has now been a part of our lives. Someway, in a different way, we are tied to a different country because of our relatives" (Interview 3).⁷

1.3 Literature Review

In the following literature review, I would like to identify the current state of research in relation to research on Philippine labor migration. A good introduction on the topic of Philippine migration is the volume 'At home in the world' by Aguilar (2002). It combines studies on migrant contract construction workers (Gibson/Graham 2002), migrant domestic workers (Pratt 2002, Constable 2002, Bagley/Madrid/Bolitho 2002), and the integration of first and second generation Filipinos in their countries of destination (Le Espiritu 2002, Wolf 2002).

One manner in which to approach the topic of Philippine migration is from a regional point of view: migration within the region of Southeast Asia. There are a number of edited volumes which provide a comparative perspective on migration in Southeast Asia. A volume edited by Wille/Passl (2001) focuses on female labor migration in Southeast Asia by studying the countries of origin, for example on migration from Indonesia or the Philippines. Moreover, Hugo – a specialist on Indonesian migration – has written numerous papers on current migration trends in the Asia-Pacific region (Hugo 2004a, Hugo 2004b). Ananta/Arifin's (2004) volume combines chapters related to current migration history in Southeast Asia, the link between foreign direct investments and international labor, irregular migration, transnational networks, and policies in international migration. The connection between transnational migration and work in Asia is the focus of Hewison/Young's (2006) volume, with case studies on the conditions of everyday life for migrants, as well as chapters on the historical and structural causes of migration in Asia. Oishi's (2005) monograph looks at the perspective of female migrants with regards to globalization and state policies

⁷ Names of experts are anonymized (Interviews 1-19).

in Asia. The work of Piper centers on the rights of foreign workers, migrant rights activism, and gender in the region of Southeast Asia (for example Piper 2004, Piper 2013, Piper/Rother 2011, Piper/Rother 2012). Finally, the Asian and Pacific Migration Journal (APMJ) is a leading journal which examines migration from an Asian perspective.

Another angle by which to analyze Philippine migration is from the perspective of gender studies – mainly from the sociology of gender – dealing with care work and domestic work. The domain of migrant domestic and care work is not restricted to Filipina migrants; it has a global dimension as well. For example, Polish women care for the German elderly, Sri Lankan women are employed in Saudi Arabian households, and women from Latin America take care of their American employers' children. Due to the global dimension of this topic, there are structural similarities of which the following are just a few examples: reproductive work is mainly performed by women, and domestic work is often not considered to be real work *per se*. These types of work mainly take place in private households which increases the migrant women's vulnerability – especially in the case of live-in domestic workers – and prevents the migrant women from bringing their families and maintaining transnational households.⁸ What studies on domestic work have in common is their focus on the economic aspect of migrant women's experiences.

Anderson's work sheds light on aspects of race and class in domestic work in the North (Anderson 2000); while the situation of Mexican and Central American women in private homes in Los Angeles is the focus of Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2001) work. In the case of Germany, Lutz (2008) looks at the experiences of female domestic workers and their employers. The transnational lives of Indonesian domestic workers were studied by Bach (2013) and Killias (2012).

De Regt (2008) describes the preferences of Yemenite employers for Asian domestic workers. Since Filipina migrant women have occupied a large part of this global niche of migrant work, a bulk of the work is reserved for domestic workers from the Philippines. Parreñas' (2003) study is probably the most well-known for her introduction of the concepts of 'international division of reproductive labor' (Parreñas 2003: 72) and 'contradictory class mobility' (Parreñas 2003: 150). She com-

⁸ See chapter 9, 10 and 13.

compares Filipina domestic workers in Los Angeles (USA) and Rome (Italy) in relation to their incorporation into the four key institutions of migration: the nation-state, family, labor market, and migrant community.⁹ Tacoli (1996) studied Filipino migrants in Rome. The tensions between mothering, political economy and marriage of Filipina workers in the entertainment industry of Sabah were the focus of Hilsdon's (2007) investigation. Shinozaki (2005) analyzed the class mobility of Filipina domestic workers in Germany. Gibson/Law/McKay (2001) related the experiences of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong to a discussion of multiple class processes; Liebelt (2011) discusses the meaning of care of Filipino domestic workers and care givers to the elderly in Israel. The dynamic relationship between Taiwanese employers and their migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia are the central issue in Lan's (2006) Taiwan research. Chin (1998) studied the connection between the political economy of Malaysia and female domestic workers originating from the Philippines and Indonesia. Yeoh and Huang (1998) analyzed the spatial representation of domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka in Singapore. A comparison of the reasons for migration and the maintenance of transnational families between Moroccan and Filipina domestic worker in Bologna (Italy) and Barcelona (Spain) is the focus of Zontini's (2010) work. Constable (1997) gives subjective accounts of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong; in her recent monograph, Constable sheds light on the experiences of Indonesian and Filipina migrant mothers and their babies born in Hong Kong (Constable 2014). Fresnoza-Flot (2009) compared the situation of documented and irregular Filipino migrants in France. Apart from academic work, the situation of domestic workers from the Philippines is also depicted in different films, such as *Marisol* (2009) or *Ilo Ilo* (2013) for example. The topic of Filipina marriage migration is another gendered aspect of migration with studies conducted by Lauser (2004), Beer (1996), and Piper/Roces (2003).

Another line of research focuses on the migration-development nexus. Whereas international and government organizations – such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) – assume that the remittances sent from the destination countries to the poorer

⁹ See chapter 8.2.

countries of origin lead to national development, academic research scrutinizes this assumption. The 'Human Development Report 2009' by the United Nations Development Programme focuses on the contribution of migration on human development. The volume by Castles/Wise (2008) gives a comparative perspective on this issue by looking at five emigration countries, one of which is the Philippines. In his paper, Castles (2009) looks behind the curtain of the migration and development mantra and De Haas (2012) argues that the celebration of migration as development is a neoliberal idea. Since the Philippines is among the top 4 recipient countries of remittances and has experienced 40 years of state-sponsored migration, it constitutes an interesting case. The volume of Asis/Baggio (2008) questions whether the state export of migrant workers has led to sustainable development in the Philippines. Studies also focus on the philanthropic contributions of migrants to the national development of their home countries. Basa's study (n.d.), a Filipina migrant herself, examines migrant women's – among them also Filipinas – transnational philanthropic activities in Italy. Añonuevo/Añonuevo (2008) describe diaspora philanthropy for the case of the Philippines. Finally, a critical assessment of migration from the Philippines and its effects on poverty reduction and social inequality is presented by Opiniano (2004).

Moreover, the macro-perspective can be used to study Philippine migration with a special focus on state policies and the governance of migration. The IOM report (2003) analyzes trends, policies, and inter-state cooperation with regards to migration in Asia, and compares the migration policies of the major labor sending countries in Asia. Alcid (n.d.) gives an outline of Philippine migration, including policy frameworks and socio-political issues. Gonzales (1998) critically analyzes the labor export of the Philippine state, and Tyner (2004) looks into state policy related discourse. Tigno's volume (2009a) centers its analysis on the three concepts of state, politics, and nationalism by combining empirical studies (Camroux 2009, Rother 2009) with recommendations on the management of migration (Tigno 2009b, Rojas 2009). Rodriguez's monograph (2010) focuses on the sending of workers abroad and portrays the Philippine government as a labor brokerage state. Aguilar's latest publication centers on the impact of migration on nationhood, class structure and the de-territorialized nation-state (Aguilar 2014).

Ethnographic work which examines the cultural and social aspects of labor migration in the country of origin is quite rare. A major contribution is Gardner's (1995) study on Bangladeshi migrants to Britain and the Middle East, and the effect of migration on land, family structure, marriage, and religion in a Bangladeshi community. For the Philippine case, Rugkåsa's (1997) ethnographic account looks at local meanings of 'abroad', migration as sacrifice and consumption practices in a village in the province of Bataan. Apart from Rugkåsa's dissertation, there are also more recent publications by Aguilar (2009) and McKay (2012). Aguilar's book constitutes an ethnography of an upland rural village in the province of Batangas with a high amount of out-migration. The book focuses on 'cultures of relatedness' – the family and kinship ties which are highly visible in migration. It gives ethnographic details concerning marriage, kinship, childhood, entrepreneurship, and transnational communication related to labor migration. McKay's multi-sited research design follows migrants from a rural community in the Ifugao Province through their work assignments overseas and back to their home community again. She takes the village into account with its new global dimensions.

In comparison with the three ethnographies on Philippine migration presented above, my dissertation also constitutes an ethnographic account of everyday life in the Philippines with regards to the large amount of out-migration. However, my research site is not the 'typical' ethnographic village, but instead a town in a large labor migrant sending region. Apart from the element of familial relationships, I also integrate other aspects of equal importance into my work, including gender, social status and social mobility, economies of migration, return, and legitimacy. I place strong emphasis on the interrelatedness of these cultural elements which in combination describe the culture of migration in the Philippines. In comparison with research about migration in the destination countries, research on sending countries is still relatively rare. Castles even discusses a receiving country bias: "Most migration research has taken the situation in northern destination countries as its starting point, neglecting the perspectives of origin and transit countries, and of migrants. This is not surprising, since research funding and capacities are concentrated in the North" (Castles 2010a: 7). According to him, some of the few exceptions are the APMJ and the GFMD. Most studies on migration focus on the determinants of migra-

tion, the incorporation – the different phases of integration and assimilation – of migrants in the receiving country, and policies on migration (Castles 2010a: 6). Moreover, little is known about non-migrants in the countries of origin, as stated by Cohen: “This is the challenge for studies of migration. We know a good deal about transnational migrants and where they go; what we do not understand as well are the causes of transnational migration or its outcomes and implications for nonmigrants and the households and communities that migrants leave” (Cohen 2004: 150). As shown in the literature review above, even the research on Philippine migration has a strong emphasis on receiving countries: most research centers on domestic work in the different countries of destination.

In my opinion, there is also a bias on domestic work and on women, neglecting other fields relevant to migration, such as examining the variety of occupations Filipinos have abroad for instance. I neither restricted my sample to a specific migrant occupation, nor to a particular group of migrants; in lieu of this, my research includes family members of migrants and non-migrants alike, the latter of whom remain under-researched in migration studies, in order to get the whole picture of Philippine migration culture.

1.4 Outline

The first three chapters (2 to 4) following the introduction will give theoretical, methodological and background information for the empirical section of this book. First, I will present the theoretical approach used to examine the Philippine culture of migration (chapter 2). Relevant definitions and concepts, among them social networks or remittances for example, will be explained in this chapter. After giving an outline of economic, sociological, and anthropological migration theories, I will go deeper into the concept of ‘culture of migration’. I will discuss the usage of this concept in the literature and provide suggestions as to what elements a ‘culture of migration’ approach should contain. However, other theoretical concepts which are relevant to certain sections (‘transnationalism’, ‘return migration’ or ‘international division of reproductive labor’ for example) will be presented in their own corresponding chapters. Following the theoretical section, I will portray the Philippines as a prototype for state-sponsored labor migration

through a discussion of its political, institutional and legal dimensions (chapter 3). I will also contextualize current Philippine labor migration in relation to migration within the region of Southeast Asia and discuss some of the historical precedents. The chapter on the state export of labor serves as a structural background to the emergence of a culture of migration in the Philippines: it explains the conditions which paved the way to the international labor migration which has become a way of life. After presenting this macro-view, I will outline the methodological approach (chapter 4) used in my anthropological field work for sampling, gathering, and analyzing the data. I will also reveal the problems, biases and constraints I encountered during my research in the Philippines. The subsequent chapters (5 to 13) constitute the empirical part of the dissertation with the interpretation and analysis of the data.

The first two chapters of the empirical section (5 and 6) present the lives of OFWs abroad and explain the individual motives for migration as well as the societal perceptions and ideas linked with going abroad. Chapter 5 examines the experiences of migrants working abroad in order to present some empirical details, such as the reasons for migration and the working and living conditions abroad, with a view to provide a better understanding of the social changes induced by labor migration in the Philippines which will be discussed in later chapters. The sixth chapter elaborates on the ideas and meanings of migration that are prevalent in the Philippines. I will argue that the sacrifice one makes for his or her family by going abroad constitutes a legitimate reason for migration.

The next two chapters (7 and 8) are concerned with the socio-economic issues of migration. Labor migration is usually analyzed from an economic point of view – starting with the largely economic motives for migration and ending with the calculation of remittance streams. The material basis of migration constitutes a significant proponent of the culture of migration. In chapter 7 I will therefore enquire about the contribution of remittances for national development and social inequality, and discuss the emergence of migration industries such as recruitment agencies and the mushrooming of care-related occupations. I will present the *balikbayan box*, a box filled with goodies sent home by migrants, as a reification of familial relationships. Chapter 8 examines whether migration leads to an increase in social status and upward social mobility, and the manner in which this is connected to

the emergence of a middle class. Since the provision of education for children is one of the main motives for migration, this chapter will consider the link between migration, schooling, and social mobility.

The next four chapters (9 to 12) focus on transnational social relationships and gender issues. Chapter 9 begins with a discussion of the concept of 'transnationalism' which lays the basis for understanding these four chapters. It shows how transnational familial relationships are experienced across different nation-states, through mutual visits and transnational communication by means of the internet or cell phones for example. The next chapter (chapter 10) provides a thick description and deep analysis of the interviews with two daughters of OFWs. The two case studies show how children perceive the absence of their parents. Their experiences are contextualized in the next chapter (chapter 11) where I look into conceptions of family-life in the Philippines and integrate my findings with the findings of other empirical studies on the effects of migration on children-left behind. Chapter 12 focuses on gender aspects in the households of migrant workers. I will explain the concepts of 'care' and the 'international division of reproductive labor' as a theoretical basis for understanding the roles of husbands and wives in families with a parent abroad. Who performs the care giving role in OFW families? The discussion is contextualized through a presentation of gender relations in the Philippines.

Finally, the last empirical chapter investigates return migration and reintegration (chapter 13). Since one feature of contract labor migration is that it is cyclical, return is an integral component of every migration experience. As most countries of destination follow the 'rotation principle', replacing foreign workers by 'fresh' foreign workers, migrants must return home upon completing their contracts. I will identify current conceptualizations of return migration and their implications for the case of the Philippines. I will also illustrate the challenges of social and occupational reintegration faced by returnees. Yet return is often not a definite one-way process as the term 'return' may suggest: many migrant workers who came back 'for good' will embark on another journey abroad if the need arises.

To conclude my book (chapter 14), I will examine the concept of migration once again from a theoretical point of view and relate it to the empirical findings of my research.