



UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



Returning home:

Migrant connections and visions for local development in rural Nepal

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Setting the scene: **Migration and Mobility in Nepal**

Nepal on the Move

Conflict, migration and stability



Migration hierarchy

Middleclass: new domestic migrants



“Basai Sarai”

The Nepali word for migration.

Literally:
“settlement transfer”



Theoretical foundation of this research

1) Translocal connection

Understanding multi-locality and the construction of not only the trans-national connections, but also multi-local links between various places.

(Appadurai 1996; Vertovec, 2004; Thieme, 2008; de Haas 2010 ; Brickell 2011)

2) Social Remittance

Flows beyond the economic – studies of social remittances argue that migrants also remit experiences, knowledge and habits to families and home communities

(Levitt, 1998; Piper 2009; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2010 ; Tan & Yeoh 2011)

3) Invers and circular flows

Flows are multidirectional and it should be recognized that economic and social remittances are closely related and flow together via the same connection/channels.

(Kelly & Lusia; 2006, Mazzucato, 2011)

4) Embedded behavior

Striving to understand the 'logic' behind remittance behavior as embedded in wider social systems of embodied practices.

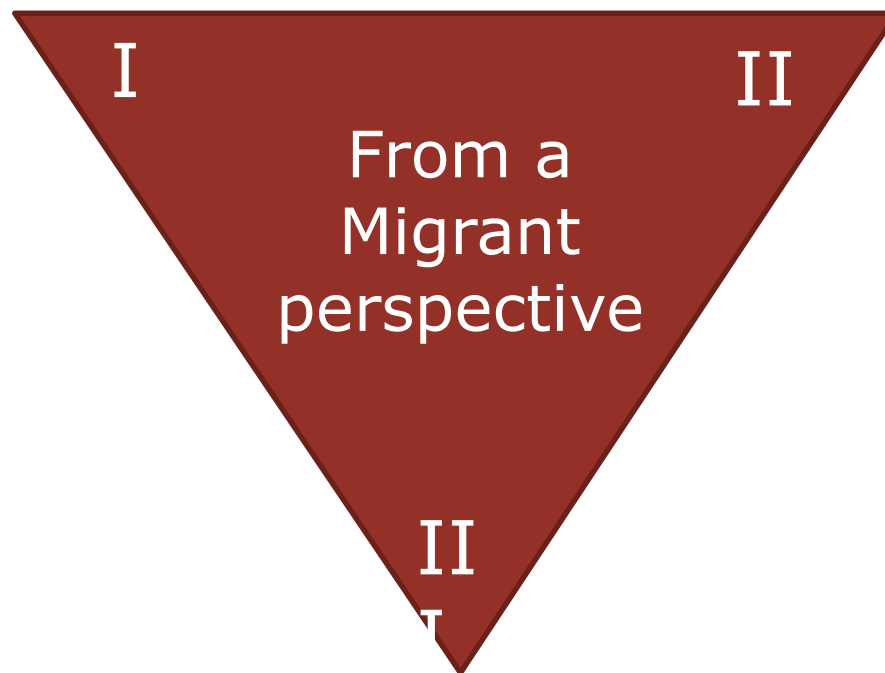
(Page & Mercer, 2012)



Understanding connections

Emotional ties

Dependency



Aspiration

S

IV

From a community perspective



Understanding connections I

Emotional ties

"I feel connected [to my village]; when I returned two days ago I left my son to play on the ground. I was reminded of how I had played in this place like him. I wanted him to feel the love of this place and let him learn how his father grew up". (educational migrant)

- Migrants simultaneously orient themselves AND feel attached to various places.
- Not rare that they express stronger feelings and emotions to their birthplace, than to their current place of residence
- Emotional ties between migrants and their home place are an important aspect of their behavioral logics



Understanding connections II

Dependency

"I depend on my parents, they have had to take loans [...] and the loans are increasing. If we [educational migrants] can't earn well enough in the future, it will be a very big problem; They have to trust in us"

(educational migrant)

- Implicit agreement to return the family's investment in migration, including the cost of education – a cost that, in many cases, has left migrant families in debt.
- Social aspects of staying connected are closely related to flows of economic and material resources.
- Interest in preserving entitlements to family property.



Understanding connections III

Aspirations

"Due to the process of globalization the world has changed a lot. I want to be the change maker for my home place. I will bring this change to come to my home place." (educational migrant)

- Migrants experience that they have changed since they left the village. They develop a strong image of themselves as agents of change.
- Educational migrants in Kathmandu express various aspirations to contribute to local development of their home place. Several of them have already been engaged in development both individually or collectively.
- They perform this role remotely because none of them aspire to return and settle in the village, as they have realized that their changed lifestyle does not fit with the rural life any more.



Understanding connections IV

Expectation from home

"They (migrants) share new things [...] They discuss their education and what they have learned. For example: now my son is here and he is teaching my classes instead of me.

(father of educational migrant)

- Skills, insights and "worldview" make migrants' connections with their home places important. They play a role and there are expectations on them to share their knowledge.
- Migrants become extensions of the rural community in the capital, where access to different resources, including knowledge are more easily accessible. They become a resource for the local community
- Successful migrants give prestige to their parents. If they return it would be considered a failure and a loss of a connection to the outside world.



Concluding remarks

Migrants trans-local life

The connections of migrants are based on feelings and dependency - and create aspiration among migrants to engage in local development in the place that legally and emotionally still is their home.

Rural development from beyond

Return migration is not preferred as rural areas benefit from the translocal connections function as extension of communities and give access to resources beyond the physical place.

Social Bias

However, it is important to acknowledge the risk that the distribution of the benefits from these connections most likely will reproduce social status and social hierarchy.

