

2018/  
2019



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

MA International Relations  
Master thesis

# Domestic workers in Hong Kong

EMPOWERMENT, AND THE IMPACT OF THE  
MIGRATION INFRASTRUCTURE

KELSEY ZEEGERS

Author:  
Kelsey Zeegers s1380524  
January 4th, 2019

Advisor:  
Dr. Salvador Santino F. Regilme Jr.  
Leiden University

## The story behind this thesis

At the beginning of 2018, I did an internship at the European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. Before I went there, a friend told me to read the book *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, written by Nicole Constable. This book was full of stories about migrant workers seeking new jobs in Hong Kong for a better life. One particular chapter attracted my attention. It was the story about how domestic workers come together on Sundays, which is their only day off per week. They gather around on the Hong Kong Island and at other places in Hong Kong. The streets are filled with the so-called, domestic workers, most of them coming from the Philippines or Indonesia. When I visit these streets on Hong Kong Island I was overwhelmed by what I saw. Groups of these migrants were sitting on the ground, playing games, eating, laughing and dancing. Although it was interesting seeing people with so little, making the best way out of their life, there, is a whole different side to their lives. These groups are very vulnerable to exploitation and violation. There are so many stories of domestic workers being physically beaten or being exploited by their employers, but also how domestic workers cannot escape these awful situations through debt bondage of their recruitment agencies. However, over the last few years' domestic workers are becoming more and more aware of their rights. NGOs are emerging to support these workers in foreign countries, but also several governmental interventions show increasing interest in the protection of migrants. Therefore, I want to get a better understanding how multiple actors, like private institutions, recruitment agencies and NGOs impact the scope and frequency of migration, but more importantly how these actors create better opportunities for domestic workers to empower themselves.

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# Introduction

Since 1970, opportunities benefiting domestic workers' moving abroad and governments in handling migration have greatly increased. This is evident in the growing appearance of new actors and new regulations concerning migration (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S123). Several studies (Adamson 2006) show how forced labour is intertwined with the globalization of migration. However, this phenomenon is not new. In fact, Adamson argues that throughout history, migration flows have occurred as a result of 'forced migration or expulsion' (Adamson 2006:171). Examples include, the mass migration of Africans who were forced to migrate to America in 1850 and the population exchange which took place between Turkey and Greece following World War I. Understanding these migration flows requires an explanation of the different periods in time and the different contexts and migration industries involved. The international movement of labour migration can be seen as a reaction to the liberalization of the economy (Xiang and Lindquist 2014), the recovery of the colonial period (Regilme 2013), and the temporary shortages of labour in several countries (Hugo 2012). As a result, however, numerous labour migrants have also become involved in different forms of labour migration or trafficking, which has led to various forms of coercion, exploitation or deception. This occurs especially in Asia, where labour migration has been a dominant feature of the economy since 1975. This is particularly because of the monetary remittances migrants send back to their countries of origin. According to Bosma, van Nederveen Meerkerk and Sarkar, 'remittances have become the largest global monetary flow after oil' (Bosma, van Nederveen Meerkerk and Sarkar 2012:2).

For states to control the flow of migrants, it must regulate border control as well as conferring citizenship rights. Although migration is mostly a legal phenomenon, several segments occur 'outside the control of national governments' (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:680). Therefore, through several globalization processes, scholars argue for a 'commercialization migration industry' (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013). This implies that migration is 'mediated' through free job agencies, NGOs, the privatization of migration control, the enforcement of new regulations, 'head-hunters', and even human trafficking. The scope of the migration industry is also an ongoing debate. Scholars (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013) define it as 'the array of non-state actors that facilitate, constrain or assist international migration' (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen 2013). According to Spaan and van Naerssen this definition is incomplete since state actors are part of the migration industry when they provide services to migrants 'in collusion' with recruitment agencies 'outside the official regulatory framework' (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:682). Simultaneously, other scholars (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, and Ignacio and Meija 2008) established a new concept, i.e. that of "migration infrastructure" in a response to the fast-growing space of the migration industry.

Therefore, Ignacio and Meija (2008) argue that analysing migration infrastructure gives us an understanding of the differences between two sending country migration infrastructures which differ in how they promote and protect migrants (Ignacio and Meija 2008:3). States highly encourage migration to other countries. States highly encourage the sending of migrant labourers to other countries. In this thesis, I explore how private sectors, institutions, NGOs, together with several states initiatives have been set up to build on a migration infrastructure to promote the movement and welfare protection of labour migrants. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research question:

*‘Does the migration infrastructure of the Philippine and Indonesia empower foreign domestic workers (FDWs), and if so, how and to what extent are they empowered?’*

Also, I argue that the emergence of regulations, new actors, the development of technology, social networks all play a large part in the migration infrastructure, which impacts the lives of labour migrants. Furthermore, I argue that since the development of migration infrastructures, we cannot understand the migration unless we analyse why it occurs (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, and Xiang, Yeoh and Toyota 2013 and Constable 2009). Therefore, the aim of my study is to determine to what extent the development of the migration infrastructure empowers the lives of foreign domestic workers.

In Asia, there is a growing demand in countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan, for migration in ‘the domestic household, construction sites and oil plantations’ (Lindquist 2018). These countries offer thus different case studies to examine how domestic workers are becoming an economic necessity to the sending country as well as a multifaceted phenomenon with a broad impact. In this thesis, I focus on the foreign domestic workers (FDWs) which move from low-income to middle- and high-income countries, seeking jobs to support their families (Benach, Muntaner, Delclos, Menéndez and Rondquillo 2011:1). Therefore, I examine the case studies of the Philippines and Indonesia (as the two sending countries) who send natives to Hong Kong (the receiving country).

## Methods

Drawing on the network and the institutional theory from Migration Studies in the sphere of the development of the migration infrastructure, I discuss how the cases of the Philippines and Indonesia highlight the multi-faceted positions on the empowerment in the neo-liberal logic. Neo-liberal logic refers to ‘the discussion on the implications of the privatization of migration management’ (Menz 2011:116). In this debate, I am interested in the way in which these cases are constituted in the decentralization of the migration infrastructure. Drawing on the theoretical concept, of migration infrastructure, as a tool to get a better understanding of the decentralization of migration and its impact on domestic workers, I attempt to answer the research question through examining ‘the necessary and sufficient conditions’ that are asserted to change the empowerment of domestic workers (Ragin and Rubinson 2011, and Reutter 2019). In terms of the necessary and sufficient conditions, scholars use a comparative analysis in which they conceptualize causality. For this thesis, I carry out an in-depth analysis (section II) together with a qualitative comparison analysis (section III) on the migration infrastructures of the Philippines and Indonesia to show how the fast-growing migration infrastructure impacts the life of domestic workers. My main argument is that with the development of migration and particularly that of migration infrastructures, we need to analyse why migration occurs in the first place. To further test this argument and to what extent it has impact on the lives of domestic workers I compare case studies involving the two afore-mentioned countries. At the end of this thesis, the comparison analysis shows why and how domestic workers migrate and also how opportunities for empowerment are created.

Presently, the degree of regulation by national governments greatly impacts the migration infrastructure. In this thesis, I study the differences in migration infrastructure between two countries on a subnational level. According to several scholars (Lankina 2012, Moncada and Snyder 2012, and Zuo 2015) the study of these differences on a subnational level is ‘attributable to the decentralization trend over the past decades’ (Zuo 2015:318). The decentralization of migration policies has occurred because states individually are unable to handle the huge flows of migrants. It also reveals how some aspects of migration are devolved to agencies or private intuitions.

To answer my research question, I perform a qualitative comparison analysis to examine if a higher degree of decentralization of migration policies impacts the lives of its domestic workers. Utilizing this method offers a tool to decide which cases I select to answer my research question. Several scholars (Berg-Schlosser et al 2009, and Ragin 2009) argue that this method identifies similarities and differences between cases in order to discover ‘causal conditions for an outcome’ (Reutter 2019:80). Therefore, this method is practical for my study because of two important reasons. Firstly, as Reutter discussed, ‘the fact that an outcome might have more than a single cause (causal complexity)’ (Reutter 2019:80).

In my thesis, I want to bring the migration infrastructure to the fore, and show that not only single actors or phenomena impacts the scope, frequency, and empowerment of migration but that there are multiple actors involved. Therefore, the ‘causal complexity’ is a key point in my thesis, implying that multiple factors can provoke the outcome of empowerment (Legewie 2013:2-3). Reutter argues that ‘different combinations of factors can lead to the same outcome, and the same combinations of factors can have different effects (Reutter 2019:80). A qualitative comparison analysis focuses not only on discovering the differences between countries in how they handle the migration flow but more importantly it seeks to discover and explain the outcome of migration infrastructure in a specific context. Secondly, this method can accurately be used with within-case analysis together with ‘formalized, systematic cross-case comparisons (Legewie 2013:2).

In this thesis, the Philippine and Indonesian migration infrastructure are selected as the case studies for the following reasons. The Philippine migration infrastructure was selected because the government has tightened the recruitment and deployment process through state regulations and government interventions. This is referred to as a ‘high migration infrastructure’. This case can be compared with the Indonesian migration infrastructure, which is in favor of privatization of migration, which is referred to a ‘low migration infrastructure’. Since I compare at a cross-national level, according to Zuo, the problem which arises from such a comparison is how theories based on ‘local specificities pose a challenge’ to compare it in different case studies (Zuo 2015:319). To overcome this challenge and to acknowledge the rules of good practice with regards to my study (Schneider and Wagemann 2010, and Reutter 2010), the first step is to carry out an in-depth analysis describing the outcomes and the five configurations of the cases. In the qualitative comparison analysis, the five configuration of migration infrastructure are those of social infrastructure, humanitarian infrastructure, commercial infrastructure, regulatory infrastructure, and the technological infrastructure. These five configurations will be discussed in the next chapter. The second step is to identify the roles of the configurations in both cases and to discuss how the causal complexity plays a role. Therefore, the third step is to determine the sufficient conditions for the outcomes of empowerment. To this end, comparison analysis can be used to discuss the impacts of a high and low migration infrastructure on domestic workers. The comparative method is used to evaluate the assumption from Ignacio and Meija in which they argue that ‘in a high migration infrastructure, state receive multiple fees from different stakeholders’. Whereas ‘the state can support institutions and NGOs that protect and promote the rights of domestic workers’ (Ignacio and Meija 2009:21).

The following chapters of my thesis are divided into a theoretical framework and literature review, followed by three sections. In the following two chapters, I discuss the theoretical framework of Migration studies, and establish a literature review on migration infrastructure, empowerment, and the remittances-process.

The first section contains a short introduction of Hong Kong as a destination country and how the reproduction of capitalism provides opportunities for migrants to work as domestic workers. The second section contains the in-depth analysis of the five configurations of the migration infrastructure of the Philippines and Indonesia through the studies of Argunias and Ruiz 2007, Rodriguez 2010, Martin, Abella and Midgley 2004, Battistella et al. 2011, Wui and Delias 2015, Oishi 2005, McKay 2005, Ignacio and Meija 2008, Anggraeni 2006, Firdausy 2005, Hugo 1993, Palmer 2016, Xiang and Lindquist 2014, Heryanto and Mandal 2003, and Kloppenburg 2013. In the third section of my thesis, I use a qualitative comparison analysis to examine the different migration infrastructures of the two sending countries, followed by a brief discussion.

## The theoretical framework of Migration studies

Over the years migration has developed into a fast-growing phenomenon which greatly impacts both the sending and receiving countries. There has also been a growing interest in the matters of international migration and development between migrant sending and receiving countries. Corroboration of the arguments that are made throughout this thesis involves three important theoretical concepts: the migration infrastructure, empowerment, and the remittance-process. These concepts will be conceptualized in my literature review. To better understand my research, I firstly discuss the theoretical framework of “international migration”. For this purpose, a theoretical framework will be performed on the history of Migration studies, development and the substantially change with respect to the global economy<sup>1</sup>. Drawing from these theories my main argument is that with the development of migration, and particularly migration infrastructure, we need to analyse why migration occurs and how ‘they are moved by others’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Migration and the impact it conducts, has been discussed throughout the years. According to Haas, ‘optimistic developmental views’ on migration emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, leading to ‘a more structuralistic, neo-Marxist pessimism and skepticism’ in 1970. In the 1980s a more ‘nuanced view’ developed through the development of economies and the impact of labour migration (Haas 2008:2). Nevertheless, from the year 2000 and following policy debates, optimistic views on migration increased in developing countries especially, due to the new remittances flow which migrants send back home (Yaung 2005, Pernia 2008, and Rahman and Fee 2009).

Presently, scholars argue that the current theoretical frameworks for understanding the different forces of international migration are weak (van Hear 2010 and Haas 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> Before 1990, scholars that write their theories of migration were studying ‘the effects of the end of the Cold War and of the bipolar world’. It is clear that these theories are not based on the volume of refugees and diaspora formats that started in the after 1990. Today, migration processes and the global economy are influenced through the ‘formation of substantial diasporas along with the rapid socio-technological change’ across the globe (van Hear 2010:1535). Therefore, examining international migration and its processes should be placed in the area of the global economy.



Although many attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive theory, only a fragmented set of theories exists. According to van Hear, this fragmented set of theories can be seen as ‘a strength of diversity of approaches that characterize Migration Studies’ (van Hear 2010:1535). Therefore, Castles suggest that defining migration is complex and that migration should be examined in a wider context of society, using a broad range of theories to get a better understanding on the ‘interconnectedness, complexity, irregularity, and the position of its processes in the rapid global change’ (Castles 2010:1565). To deliberate on this theory, I try to answer my research question ‘Does the migration infrastructure of the Philippine and Indonesia empower foreign domestic workers (FDWs), and if so, how and to what extent are they empowered?’. Therefore, I analyse the various fragments set and the criticism of these approaches. Therefore, I discuss several leading theories of Migration Studies that explain the creation of a new population which is willing to migrate as domestic workers to Hong Kong.

In the discourse of international migration, theories vary in scope, from the micro-level of individuals (neoclassical economic theory, Harris and Todaro 1970, and Ranis and Fei 1961), the meso-level of families and communities (new economics theory, Lucas and Stark 1985) and the macro-level of forces operating at a higher level (world systems theory, Wallerstein 1974). These multiple explanations complement one another by focusing on different fragments of migration. It is important to use multiple theories to explain the various causes and changes in international migration in a specific context. Massey et al. also used several theories to explain ‘the causal processes related to international migration that might operate’ in the diversified fragments (Massey et al 1993:455). Scrutinizing these causal processes is an empirical task that requires to focusing on a specific context. In the following section I will discuss three theories that contributes to influential literature on migration. Firstly, the neoclassical economics theory that suggests that migration is an individual decision with the purpose of boosting one’s income. Secondly, the new economics theory argues that other factors are involved in the decision to emigrate. For example, decisions may be made to minimize risks to family income or to overcome capital constraints on family production activities (Massey et al 1993:432). Thirdly, the world systems theory, which argues that as long as ‘goods, raw materials and labour’ in poorer countries are ‘influenced and controlled by the markets of developed countries’, the flow of migration ‘is inevitable’ (O’Reilly 2015, and Massey et al. 1993).

In the past, theories regarding international migration to explain the huge migration of labour migrants concluded that the aim of migration was income maximization (Harris and Todaro 1970, and Ranis and Fei 1961). Therefore, neoclassical economists argue that international migration began due to ‘the geographical differences in the supply of and demand for labour’ (Massey et al 1993:433). According to Zolberg (1989), de Haas (2008), and O’Reilly (2015), the geographer Ravenstein has influenced the work of numerous ‘economists, geographers and demographers’, that have examined the process of migration.

In his laws of migration, Ravenstein, describes ‘the classic individual relocation’ (Zoldberg 1989:403). This pattern of individual relocation involves movement from poorly populated regions to wealthier countries. Today, scholars still argue that ‘beneficial or unfavorable economic conditions’ contributes to one’s decision to migrate (Castles and Miller 2003 and Haas 2008). According to the neo-classical economics theory this is ‘a cost-benefit calculation’ (Harris and Todaro 1970, and Ranis and Fei 1961 and Castles and Miller 2003). This perspective conceives that ‘people move if this maximizes their individual utility (usually through higher income) and cease to move or even move back if the cost-benefit equation changes’ (Castles 2004:208). However, this neoclassical economic theory restrains its approach to the isolated individual migrants. The new economics theory of migration argues that such decisions should be seen in a wider context, i.e. in relation to families or households (Taylor 1992). Expressing how the decisions to migrate is made collectively, they suggest that the decision is made not only to maximize their income, but also to minimize household risks or risks that are related ‘with market failure’ (Lucas and Stark 1985). Therefore, migration can be examined as a family strategy ‘to overcome imperfections in both insurance and credit markets in credit-constrained rural households’ (Deshingkar and Zeitlyn 2015:170). According to Masset et al. in developed countries household incomes are to a certain extent secured by ‘private insurance markets or governmental programs’ (Massey et al. 1993:436). However, in developing countries, like the Philippines and Indonesia, ‘institutional mechanisms’ to secure ‘household incomes’ are mostly incomplete, missing or unavailable for poor families (Massey et al. 1993:436).

According to Wallerstein (1974) the world systems theory implies that the world itself is a capitalist system where poor countries, i.e. the so-called periphery, ‘provide a constant supply of cheap labour to support the powerful and wealthy nations at the core of the system’ (O’Reilly 2015:27). In the 1980s a few sociological theorists conceived the idea that the generation of international migration needs to be linked to the structure of world market that changes over time (Petras 1981 and Castells 1989). Within this context, the world systems theory explains the creation of populations that are willing to migrate because of the infiltration of capitalist economic interactions with non-capitalist countries. Therefore, migration is a natural consequence of disorder and displacement that ‘unavoidably occurs in the process of capitalist development’ (Massey et al. 1993:447). Furthermore, capitalism has expanded across the world and led to a world economy that is managed by global cities. Since the world economy shifted from an industrial to a more knowledge-based economy during the nineteenth century, these cities concentrate on intellectual capital such as high-tech production, finance, banking, and professional services (Haas 2008 and Sen 1999). In these cities, the changing structure of the labour market creates opportunities for either higher or lower skilled workers (Massey et al. 1993:447).

In studying Hong Kong in terms of the particular process of capitalist development, Wee and Sim emphasize how ‘the labour power of migrant domestic workers has been produced and reproduced outside Hong Kong’s capitalist system, but is incorporated into it through migration’ (Wee and Sim 2005:176). Following the theory of Wee and Sim, Hong Kong is seen as a destination country in response to the changing position of Hong Kong in the world-economy, where it has grown into a ‘service-based economy’ with a demand for domestic workers (Wee and Sim 2005:176).

The theories of migration discussed previously, show that the decision to migrate involves numerous factors. These include, the maximization of income, an effort to secure household incomes and the infiltration of capitalist economic interactions with non-capitalist societies as well as a combination of these factors (Regilme 2013). However, Massey et al. argue that ‘wage differentials, relative risks, recruitment efforts and market penetration’ are also factors in the decision to move (Massey et al. 1993:448). Although economic forces are often important ‘on the cause of migration’ (Haas 2008:19), studying migration only in the light of economics does not entirely explain migration patterns. Theory on migration shows how migrants are ‘measuring, considering, and choosing new strategies and pathways’ during the different phases of migration (Spaan and van Naerssen 2017:683). For people to migrate, they need sufficient ‘knowledge, skills and financial’ means. However, most prospective migrants lack these means (Spaan and van Naerssen 2017:683). Over time new interactions emerge between prospective migrants and brokers, new migrant networks and institutions that influence the decision to migrate (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, Massey et al. 1993, and Constable 2009).

Contextualizing this to the domestic workers in the Philippines and Indonesia requires theories, which explains a deeper understanding of the change in the social structure as well as in the capitalist system. Two theories concentrate on these new factors and the development of migration infrastructure, namely the network theory (Mabogunje 1970) and the institutional theory (Scott 1995). The network theory emphasizes the importance of ‘interpersonal ties’, which link migrants in the sending and receiving countries such ‘as kinships, friendship and a shared community of origin’ (Massey et al. 1993:448). With the development of migration infrastructure, social studies (Geertz 1965, Wolf 1966, and Scott and Kerkvliet 1977) emphasize the importance of the patron-client networks<sup>2</sup> that have arisen in Asia. This was in response to the inefficiency of the country to handle migration and in the protection of migrants. This patron-client network will be further discussed later. To examine the interactions between migrants and all the actors involved, network interactions provide a new form of social capital that can be used by migrants ‘to gain employment abroad’.

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<sup>2</sup> “These networks are integral part of a ‘moral economy’ in which clients willingly consent to exploitation by higher-status patrons, with the expectation that the patron will ensure the livelihood of the client in the event of hardship” (Rudnyckyj 2004:414).

However, the institutional theory argues that ‘the international flow of labour migrants is institutionalized and independent of the factors that originally caused it’ (Massey et al 1993:451).

Since the 1990s, private institutions and voluntary organizations have emerged as a response to the increasing demand for labour migrants. The shortcomings of countries to manage these flows of labour migrants, unfortunately, create opportunities for a black market in migration. In the scheme of this black market, labour migrants are victims of exploitation and abuse. In response, voluntary organizations have emerged to invoke the rights and proper treatment of legal and illegal migrants. Acknowledging these new institutions creates another ‘structure of social capital’ that migrants can use ‘to seek employment overseas’ (Haas 2008:20, and Messay et al. 1993). Both of these theories show how new forms of social capital appear to create better access to employment abroad. To summarize, a deep understanding of the wide-ranging perspective of migration processes requires the relocation of the individual into a wider and interconnected set of circumstances at local, national and global levels (Castles 2010:1565).

Building on these theories, and with the emergence of ‘the migration industry’ (Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2012 and Hernández-León 2013), scholars (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, and Ignacio, E., Y. Mejia 2009) have formalized a new concept, that of “migration infrastructure”. In this concept, the institutionalization of migration, but also network interactions and technological features are embodied. According to Xiang and Lindquist there are five dimensions of migration infrastructure. Each of these dimensions occurs differently in a specific space and time. Xiang and Lindquist define migration infrastructure as ‘the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S124). As I previously discussed, and according to Ignacio and Mejia, differences between countries migration infrastructures lead to disparities in the protection and welfare of migrants (Ignacio and Mejia 2008).

The Philippine government is attempting to promote and protect the well-being of domestic workers through a ‘state-managed system’ (Romina Guevarra 2006). It tries to manage the export of domestic workers through strict regulations regarding the recruitment process, bank accounts, the flow of remittances and transport. Despite the fact that in Indonesia the management system of migration has transformed from ‘a laissez-faire approach to a state-managed system’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:628). Indonesia could not handle the increasing migration pressure together with the increased commercial interest of labour recruiters and employers. In around 2000, a decentralization of the government occurred that ‘contributed to a lack of coordination and clarity regarding jurisdiction and responsibilities at a local level’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:682). Simultaneously, this created opportunities for the private sector to gain a large section of the migration services market (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). This shows that although these governments both have a state-managed migration system their approach differ in how strict they regulate migration.

Thus far, it is clear that developing a migration infrastructure creates better opportunities for domestic workers to empower themselves. However, the existence of private institutions also allows for opportunities for the illegal recruitment of migrants. In my literature review, I will conceptualize the migration infrastructure that I will use to compare the two afore-mentioned infrastructures.

Currently, one of the weaknesses with respect to the study of international migration is the trend of some scholars to individually examine the impacts and causes of migration. As discussed, it is important to take into account the multiple theories that acknowledge the importance of the structural constraints on individual decisions, and the ties with new agencies, institutions and migration networks. Through formulating a migration infrastructure, I attempt to understand the process of migration in a wider context. I use the five configurations to compare the differences in the migration infrastructures of the Philippines and Indonesia.

## **Literature review**

*'Migration has become business, big business'*  
(Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2012)

### Migration infrastructure

Theoretically, infrastructure refers to 'built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people or ideas, and allow for their exchange over space' (Larkin 2012:328). To continue, physically infrastructure construct 'the nature of a network' and the velocity of the direction (Larkin 2012:328). However, as infrastructure is defined as a system, this concept can be analysed in different categories including for e.g. governance infrastructure, energy infrastructure, environment infrastructure or in this case migration infrastructure. Thus, as Larkin argues conceptualizing the meaning of infrastructure becomes categorical. Using infrastructure in a specific context, it is necessary to determine which network should be discussed and which parts can be omitted. Also, the discussion of migration infrastructure requires information on two levels, namely from inside state institutions and from the systematically interlinked dimensions (this refers to all the dimensions involved in the migratory process). Building a migration infrastructure is not a linear process but rather a dynamics process, which focuses on the different sectors involved. According to Portes the complexity of aspects that are involved in these processes makes each effort to establish a comprehensive framework or theory useless (Portes 1997). Therefore, the underlying problem of analysing a dynamic concept such as infrastructure firstly requires a discussion on how to conceptualize this framework.

Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen propose that migration is business. Indeed, new institutions, NGOs and international institutions have emerged globally as actors involved in migration. Their purpose can be to either facilitate or to restrict migration. Thus, all of these new actors contribute to international migration industry (Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2012). This is an important part in every step of the migratory process. For instance, after the Asian economic crisis in 1997, licensed recruitment agencies, or the so-called human recourses as well as ‘brokers’ have become important key actors to facilitate mobilization (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Another example is seen in China wherein 1979, four Chinese recruitment companies sent out 2.190 workers to Japan, Singapore or South Korea. After 30 years this has increased ‘to 600.000 workers’ whereby ‘3.000 licensed recruitment companies’ have emerged (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). As discussed previously, the decision to migrate is based on information on the social, political and economic conditions offered by the migration infrastructure. However, it is also dependent on ‘entrance and employment regulations’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:683) of the destination country. In response to the emergence of the migration industry, Xiang and Lindquist divide “migration infrastructure” into five dimensions. As previously stated, the theory of Migration Studies shows the importance of the cohesive networks which is incorporated in the definition of Xiang and Lindquist. They define migration infrastructure as ‘the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions and actors that facilitate and condition mobility (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S122). To this end, they established a framework with five dimensions i.e. the commercial, regulatory, humanitarian, social and technological dimensions. Outlining the different dimensions shows how they are highly intertwined with one another. Reviewing the literature of Hernández-León (2013), Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen (2013), and Xiang and Lindquist (2014), all agree that to understand the migratory process, all networks must be discussed. Therefore, in this study, I will elaborate on the framework of Xiang and Lindquist and discuss new perspectives of various scholars to construct a comprehensive conceptualization of migration infrastructure (Castles 2004, Price 1963, Rudnyckij 2004, and Bosma van Nederveen Meerkerk and Sarkar 2012) and how this can be used to answer my research question.

### *1. Social infrastructure*

The first dimension of migration infrastructure is that of social infrastructure. This dimension consists of the social networks in the communities of sending countries and the networks that arise in the destination country. This part of the infrastructure analyses how social networks impact the lives of FDWs in their migrant journey. According to Price ‘chain migration’ in the sending country is a way to describe how formal migrants are generally followed by young workers of their community or even by members of their own family (Price 1963). Notably, the relationship between migrants and their families and community plays an important role in the lives of FDWs.

Theoretically discussed, the approach of the ‘new economies labour migration’ refers to the new strategies of families to send one member to work in another country. Coming back to the development of the patron-client network, social scholars (Geertz, 1965, Wolf 1966 and Scott and Kerkvliet 1977) argue that the absence of strong state interventions contributes to the importance of patron-client networks. Rudnyckyj defines the patron-client network as the relationship between a client and a higher-status patron whereby the client ‘willingly consents to exploitation but with the expectation that the patron will ensure the livelihood of the client’ (Rudnyckyj 2004:414). For instance, in the past, it was very common that farmers were exploited by rich patrons in exchange for protection when they experienced negative economic events. The patron-client network is an effective concept to explain different networks. With the emergence of new agents, this network can be used to analyse how the relationships between migrants and agents, or brokers work in the absence of involvement from the state.

## *2. Humanitarian infrastructure*

The second dimension of migration infrastructure is that of humanitarian infrastructure. This refers to the new players with a humanistic approach that concentrates on the protection of FDWs. Since 1970 the merging of private sector institutions and NGOs results in the collaboration with states to form better migration infrastructures. This shows that there are multiple non-state institutions involved in managing the increased migration flow. The aim of these actors is to promote and protect the mobility and conditions of FDWs (Wui and Delias 2015). For example, the establishment of the Mission for Migrant Workers in 1981 and the Asian Migrant Centre in 1989 empowered FDWs (Wui and Delias 2015:190). According to Rudnyckyj such networks illustrates the ‘interconnection of the “global” economy with localized moral economies’ (Rudnyckyj 2004:407). Mass media, NGOs, private sector institutions and international organizations play an important part of the migration infrastructure through their ‘transnational advocacy networks and funding circuits’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S134). This implies that states that attempt to improve their migration infrastructure aim to improve the subject of ‘forced migration’ through several objectives. According to Ignacio and Mejia, countries with a higher migration infrastructure focus on collecting fees from several stakeholders and together promote a shared responsibility for the protection and empowerment of FDWs (Ignacio and Mejia 2009).

## *3. Commercial infrastructure*

The third dimension of migration infrastructure is that of commercial infrastructures, including recruitment intermediaries. The livelihood strategy of migrants ‘partly or fully depends on transportation companies or the granting of legal advice from persons with personal knowledge and contacts’ (Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Nyberg Sørensen 2013:3).

Cohen states that the migration industry consists of private lawyers, travel agents, recruitments agencies, and actors that contribute to the connection between the sending and destination countries (Cohen 1997). These new players can be described as ‘the intermediaries’. The engagement of several intermediaries’, however, increases the costs and the number of disputes across the region. This highlights the complexity of commercial infrastructure, in which competition arises among various chains of recruiters. According to Xiang and Lindquist this is due to the fact that ‘brokers co-operate insufficiently or brokers deliberately misinform in the chain’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S137-S138). Perhaps it is somewhat confusing that the patron-client network is discussed under social infrastructure rather than under commercial infrastructure. However, there is a distinction between the social network and how the intermediaries impact migratory processes. The commercial infrastructure dimension focuses on how their existence is a broad part of the migration services market, ‘thereby influencing volume and directionality of labour migration’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2008:682), and omits relationship between the migrant and for example a broker.

#### *4. Regulatory infrastructure*

The fourth dimension is that of regulatory infrastructure. Through the involvement of multiple actors, migration infrastructure can be associated with a two-fold development in the political system. Firstly, that of the intensification of state regulation capacity and secondly, the increased focus of states in sending migrants to developed countries. This reveals how the exportation of labour migrants are stipulated as a ‘labour brokage strategy’ (Rodriguez 2010). For example, Rodriguez argues that particularly in the Philippines, labour brokerage is a ‘neoliberal strategy that is comprised of institutional and discursive practices through which the Philippine state mobilizes its citizens and sends them abroad to work for employers throughout the world while generating a profit from the remittances that migrants send back to their families’ (Rodriguez 2010:X). The labour brokage strategy is ‘legitimized’ through the remittance-process (Ye 2016), the definition which will be discussed in the literature review. Despite the fact that in some circumstances, liberalization eliminates state control on the recruitment process, it can strengthen the general regulatory capacity involving migration. This is dependent on how the country applies a state-based centralized institution to control the export of labour migrants. Therefore, understanding the upswing of migration infrastructure requires a critical review of the regulatory capacity of the state to manage migration and its changing patterns (Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Nyberg Sørensen 2013:12). During the migration process, migrants deal with the governmental operation in licensing, training and procedures for documentation (Rudnyckij 2004).



## 5. *Technological infrastructure*

Technological infrastructure is the fifth dimension of migration infrastructure. This involves the communication between states and private companies that monitor the transport of FDWs. According to Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Nyberg Sørensen ‘there has been a substantial privatization of migration control’, indicating that the control of people leaving or arriving in a country is carried out by private security companies and airlines (Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Nyberg Sørensen 2013:4). It also implies how important the airports are since they transport migrants. Indeed, Xiang and Lindquist argue that ‘the airline industry’ is an important key player, which has significantly ‘transformed the transport of migrants’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S124). Border checkpoints and checking travel documents relies on new technologies. This massive development of technology is evident in new systems of data storage and in the biometric identifiers of transport companies (Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Nyberg Sørensen 2013:4-5). This new technology is used in ‘the exchange communication between these companies and governments on an international level’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S135). Through comparing the technological infrastructure of both the Philippines and Indonesia I show how airports collaborate with states to offer protection and facilitate the mobility of migrants to move.

### Empowerment of Foreign domestic workers (FDWs)

In this thesis, the theoretical concept of empowerment is used to analyse how FDWs seek to find a way of living as a migrant. Empowerment is frequently used to examine how minorities or marginalized groups try to reshape and develop their activities and practices in their everyday lives. For instance, Mosedale argues that ‘if we want to see people empowered we consider them to be currently disempowered or disadvantaged by the way power relations presently shape their choices, opportunities and well-being’ (Mosedale 2005:243). Also, Scheyvens, argues that empowerment of marginalized groups can be defined as a way in which disempowered individuals or groups are triggered to take control over their lives (Scheyvens 2009). After 1990, the flow of women’s groups, aid donors and development agencies increased to encourage the empowerment of migrant women (Wui and Delias 2015:190). For example, in Singapore, activists started the day-off campaign, the outcome of which ‘led to the Singapore government’s Ministry of Manpower legislating for a mandatory day off for migrant domestic workers’ (Amrith 2015:7). This demonstrates the influence that campaigns and public awareness initiatives of civil society organizations can have on empowerment (Amrith 2015:7). Scheyvens argue that generally disempowered people can still become empowered in several ways (Scheyvens 2009). To link this with the migration infrastructure, this concept provides new opportunities for domestic workers regarding ‘social-cultural change, self-empowerment, new experiences and freedoms’ (Amrith 2015:9). Different ethnographic studies show that the empowerment of FDWs can be achieved through friendship, educational courses, and the increased awareness of migrant’s value and rights.

However, there is no generally accepted method to identify and measure the changes involved in such empowerment (Anggraeni 2006, Constable 2009, Amrith 2015). In this thesis, I analyse the following two phenomena's; those of awareness and protest which all can be used as mechanisms for empowerment in the form of tools to overcome exploitation and to help to achieve well-being. Finally, it is crucial to note that empowerment is an ongoing process. It has no final destination, as Mosedale states 'people are empowered, or disempowered, relative to others, importantly, relative to themselves at a previous time (Mosedale 2005:244). Using several ethnographic studies (Anggraeni 2006, Constable 2009, Amrith 2015, Rudnyckj 2004) I analyse the concept of empowerment of domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia in Hong Kong over the last ten years.

### The remittance-process

To understand how migration infrastructure impacts the lives of FDWs, the role of remittances should be explained. As I previously discussed, remittances play a crucial role in the decision for migrants to seek employment abroad but also in 'the implementation and formation' of state regulations to protect its export workers (Castles 2004:227). For some states sending labour migrants become a labour brokage strategy that is legitimized through their remittance (Ye 2016). Through conceptualizing this concept, I illustrate the importance of this concept in the migration infrastructure. It is evident that there is an increasing flow of woman migrating alone in order to support their families. Indeed, Rahman and Fee estimate that around two million Asian women worked in neighbouring countries in the year 2000 (Rahman and Fee 2009:103). According to Jia, Du and Wang, poor rural areas suffer from a shortage of capital and are mostly located in isolated and distant areas (Jia, Du and Wang 2017). In this context, new strategies for obtaining an income are implied by rural low-income families. Therefore, labour is constructed to be an important productive fundament. It is estimated that around two million immigrants, mostly women, 'remit more than US\$ 3 billion from Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore, averaging from US\$ 300 to US\$500 per person' per year' (Rahman and Fee 2009:104). Rahman and Fee refer to this as "family remittances". These studies (Rahman and Fee 2009, Jia, Du and Wang) show us that one of the main aims of FDWs in migrating is to be able to financially support their families and communities. In this context, scholars argue that remittances are used as an economic necessity. Especially in states such as the Philippines and Indonesia, migrants are important economic contributors through their remittances (Zosa and Orbeta 2009). These remittances can be used for new investments (in housing or schooling) or for household consumption. Using the concept of remittance in relation to the migration infrastructure gives a better understanding of how the actors move domestic workers and how domestic workers migrate for the purpose of being able to send remittances.

# Section I

## 1.1. Hong Kong as a destination country

In Asia, Hong Kong is one of the popular destination countries for foreign domestic workers. Throughout the years it has developed to become an important world-class metropolis. Indeed, Wee and Sim state that Hong Kong has developed from a manufacturing centre to a service-based economy' (Wee and Sim 2005:175). Similarly, to Singapore (Ye 2016), its labour market configurations are an outcome from specific trends of economic development that are prevailing 'in the global political economy' (Ye 2016:1). Therefore, Wee and Sim argue that the capitalist system of Hong Kong has been produced and reproduced in and outside the metropolis (Wee and Sim 2005). Through neoliberalism and the movement of the shifted manufacturing, new forms of labour have appeared with the outcome of economic restructuring. This restructuring has impacts beyond the borders of Hong Kong (Wee and Sim 2005). Two important movements need to be explained. The first one is a local movement, which began in the 1970s, whereby middle-class women entered the workplace leaving undesirable jobs needing to be filled. In order to fill this gap, a transnational movement (the second movement) occurred in which migrants apply for these new job opportunities in Hong Kong (Wee and Sim 2005). As a result, a transnational movement was set up between countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

### *1.1.1. The production and reproduction of capitalist system*

A few decades ago, the movements of people from and through Asia was only possible on special occasions. However, since the colonization of Hong Kong in 1841 by Britain, it became a destination for migrants from mainland China. A few years later migrants across Asia entered Hong Kong from mainland China but especially those from the Philippines and Indonesia, in different chronological waves. These migrants were seeking a better live in Hong Kong or in other countries such as Canada or European countries. Despite the handover in 1997 to China, Hong Kong is still known for its 'one country, two systems' governance. It is 'the mix of liberal capitalism' with 'the rule of law' that draws Hong Kong as an 'appealing destination country' (Wee and Sim 2005:194).

Previously I argued how Hong Kong is considered to be a global capitalist city. Sassen argues that a global city consists of both 'the movement of transnational workforce' and 'the movement of capital' (Sassen 2001). Therefore, to get a deeper understanding of the movement of domestic workers we need to look at the production and reproduction of the capitalist system. After 1980s, the 'more developed capitalist mode of production' became connected to 'two developed modes of production' (Wee and Sim 2005:176). Firstly, the manufacturing sector shifted towards mainland China to make use of its cheap labour. Secondly, the social reproduction of Hong Kong is linked to domestic helpers that replace some female roles in the household (Wee and Sim 2005). McKay argues that in a

community in the north of the Philippines, the migration of women to Hong Kong is 'both a cause and a result of a transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture' (Mckay 2005:89). As a result, paid domestic work becomes an important part of the society of Hong Kong as increasing numbers of women accede the formal sector (Constable 1997, Chiu 1999, and Lowe 2000). Thus FDWs, or 'helpers' are needed to sustain the workforce in Hong Kong. Additionally, the demand for these workers in Hong Kong is increasing because of the aging population and economic growth (Banister, Bloom and Rosenbery 2010:15).

Numerous 'elements contribute to the vulnerability of domestic workers' (Cheng 1996:140). Cheng defines the concept of work in the capitalist system as 'a production process' that contributes to 'capital accumulation and change' (Cheng 1996:140). In most societies, the practices of domestic workers, 'households', are not acknowledged as work. As result, domestic workers are 'often treated as non-workers' (Cheng 1996:141). Traditionally, a majority of domestic workers live with their families. Considering the home as a workplace complicates issues surround the working conditions. For instance, workers in a bakery or an organization have a physical working place which is clear to both the employer and his employee. For domestic workers living with their employer, the house of their employer is both their private place as well as the place of work which results in unclear working hours (Cheng 1996).

### *1.1.2. Issues of female domestic workers in Hong Kong*

In around 1970, Hong Kong had to deal with the growing numbers of Filipino workers to work in the domestic sector (Wee and Sim 2005). Indonesia was a comparative latecomer to the market of Hong Kong (Hugo 1995). In response to these flows, the government of Hong Kong implemented a strict procedure for requesting visas. In '2005 there were 124.000' formal Philippine FDWs (Constable 2009:148). The number of Indonesian FDWs increased from '6.000 in 1993 to 90.000 in 2005' (Constable 2009:148). In 2005, the FDWs in Hong Kong included 53% Filipinos and 43% from Indonesia (Chan 2014:93). This information reveals the increasing numbers of FDWs who are settling in Hong Kong as domestic workers. However, several cases of domestic workers in Hong Kong illustrate how the law is insufficient to protect FDWs domestically (Chan 2014). For instance, Chan emphasizes two case studies of Indonesian helpers that are physically abused by their employers. Also, several newspapers are trying to get attention to act on the hallmarks of forced labour in Hong Kong. Many FDWs are dealing with 'physical or sexual violence, contractual deception, the retention of passports and excessive agencies fees leading to debt bondage' (Chan 2014:95).

Across the world, the UN Women and International Trade Union Confederation emphasizes that domestic workers are one of the least protected labour groups under national labour legislation (ITUC 2013). According to Chan, FDWs are frequently deceived regarding their contractual or legal rights. In such instances, agencies do not return duplicates of employment contracts to FDWs. Different ethnographic studies and conducted interviews show that FDWs are often over-worked, or

fall in pray to debt bondage. In some situations, employers pay even less than the minimum wage. In other situations, passports or other forms of identification are being withheld as collateral for fees which FDWs still must pay. Following the 1997 Immigration Ordinance Cap 115<sup>3</sup> of Hong Kong (Chan 2014:94), domestic workers cannot get a permanent residency, ranking them as ‘second-class citizens’. Shockingly, FDWs are permitted to get only one rest day per week and get only twelve official holidays. However, even with this law, some FDWs are denied any rest days or holidays. Also, the framework lacks compulsory live-in laws and domestic workers’ rights are not the same as those of workers in Hong Kong (Chan 2014). Presently, FDWs have to deal with these issues while they differ greatly between individuals. On a positive note, there are also cases where exploitation and abuse do not occur. All-encompassing, domestic workers in Hong Kong are not granted permanent residence and, instead are offered a particular contract for FDWs whereby they are disempowered in comparison with native workers. The ways in which FDWs empower themselves in these situations will be further discussed in section 3. In the next paragraphs, the migration infrastructures of the Philippines and Indonesia are studied.

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<sup>3</sup> “For the purposes of this Ordinance, a person shall not be treated as ordinarily resident in Hong Kong – (vi) while employed as a domestic helper who is from outside Hong Kong”  
<https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap115>, assessed at 8-12-2018.

## Section II

### 2.1. Case 1 the Philippines as the sending country

In Hong Kong, the domestic workers from the Philippines comprise a huge segment of the domestic sector. Therefore, in 2007, the Philippines was the largest contributor to export labour in the world (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:2, and Chang and Ling 2010). The majority of these overseas workers are temporary or contract workers, who often migrate for a specific period. According to Martin, Abella and Midgley the most prevailing type that of migrants in the Philippines is the 25-year old female graduate who leaves to work in the domestic servitude (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004). The contracts are drawn up for the FDWs often have a duration of two years and are open for renewal (Yang and Martinez 2005:4). Deployment abroad provides new opportunities to earn a higher income than is possible in the Philippines. Looking at the chronological waves, Filipino domestic workers entering Hong Kong encountered a shift in 1980 (Wee and Sim 2005). Around this time, this country had to deal with a decline in employment, especially in the production processes. As a result, the trend of women leaving to work abroad as a domestic worker emerged (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004 and Yang and Martinez 2005).

#### 2.1.1. *Regulatory infrastructure, the Overseas Employment Program*

Filipinos who are seeking to work as domestic workers in Hong Kong are highly regulated by the government in terms of three important regulations. The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and can find support at the ‘embassies, consulates and satellite Philippine Overseas Labour Offices (POLOs) in the receiving countries’ (Ignacio and Meija 2009:38). Agunias and Ruiz argue that the experiences of the Philippine governments over the years emphasize ‘the importance of developing state capacity to effectively deliver services, ensuring accountability to and representation of migrant workers’ (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:2). While a number of states struggle to ensure the protection of the workers they send abroad. The Philippines attempt to institutionalize the processes of migration. However, from the beginning, the government has received a lot of criticism on its labour-export system. Critics argue that ‘the state engages in nothing more than legal human trafficking’ (Rodriguez 2010:x). In response, the Philippine government has made a few amendments its policy on labour exportation.

In late 1970, the government implemented a deliberate policy of labour export (Agunias and Ruiz 2007). The labour-export system encourages its people to apply for work where there is demand in industrial countries. One of the reasons for this is because the Philippines suffered from political instability and high unemployment rates, even among the well-educated.

Therefore, in 1974 president Marcos generated three institutions that focus on the mobilization of export workers: ‘the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB), the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), and the National Seamen Board (NSB)’ (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:6).

Together with ‘the labour-export system’ and ‘the implementation of strict standards in the working contracts’, they attempted to regulate ‘the recruitment of Filipinos’ abroad (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004:1550). However, these government institutions alone were unable to handle the increasing flow of migrant workers and the recruitment processes. Besides, these institutions could not deal with the risks of exploitation and abuses or protect the welfare and rights that were involved in the export of workers. In response, in 1982, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) was formed to facilitate the export of workers (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004:1550). However, significant political issues still occur because of illegal recruitment agencies, reports of poor treatment and even publicized articles of the deaths of FDWs. In 1995, the government reorganized the labour-export policy and adopted the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004, Agunias and Ruiz 2007, Ignacio and Meija 2009).

Following several negative outcomes, ‘the state shifted towards’ a better ‘promotion and protection of the welfare’ of their export workers (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004). Presently, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) is the fundamental agency for protecting Filipinos abroad. For export workers, the OWWA is mandatory if a prospective domestic worker wants to go through the official channels. The benefits of an OWWA membership is that it gives better access to ‘life and disability insurance, loans, education subsidies, training, and other forms of social services and family welfare assistance (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:14). Unfortunately, the influence of OWWA on FDWs is restricted. This is partly due to the fact that it cannot interfere when domestic issues occur in the receiving country (Agunias and Ruiz 2007).

All-encompassing, the deployment of Filipino workers is currently coordinated by the Philippine government through three fundamental regulations: ‘the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippine Overseas Labour Offices (POLOs)’ (Ignacio and Meija 2009:38). With these regulations, the government institutionalizes the protection of domestic workers through ‘provision of insurance and loans’, ‘education and training’ and ‘a mechanism for repatriation’ (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:24). Rodriguez argues that ‘the Philippine state remains committed to drawing direct investments from foreign capital through neoliberal economic reforms’ (Rodriguez 2010: XVII). Therefore, it also relies increasingly on investments from its own citizens. Since the development of the recruitment process, migration has become big business (Gammeltoft-Hanes and Nyberg Sørensen 2012), referring to the 1.200 licensed recruitment agencies in 2004 with a revenue of almost 400 million dollars per year (Martin, Abella and Midgley 2004).

Most of these recruitment agencies are owned by the Overseas Placement Agencies of the Philippines (OPAP) or the Philippine Association of Service Exporters, Inc. (PASEI) (Agunias and Ruiz 2007).

The Philippine state attempts to reduce the numbers of recruiters in an effort to provide better protection to their workers overseas. However, the institutionalization of the migration process including its numerous regulations also receives criticism. The Union of Filipino Overseas Contract Workers and Recruiters advocates for fewer government regulations and high fees (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:15). These two factors cause burdens with respect to time and costs for recruiters particularly since Filipino migrants compete with other countries, such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and China in which their migrants agree to work for lower wages (Martin, Abella and Midgley 2004:1552). To conclude, recruitment agencies report that RA10022, a regulation implemented by the government to 'sought the standard of states assistance and promotion of overseas workers' welfare, causes difficulties for licensed recruitment agencies (Setyawati 2013:272. For example, PASEI, one of the biggest umbrella associations for recruitment, disagrees about the need for mandatory insurance and is advocating voluntary insurance (Agunias and Ruiz 2007:15).

### *2.1.2. Recruitment agencies in the Philippines*

In around 1978, the emergence of a private sector concerning migration infrastructure began in the Philippines. The Philippines government had difficulties in managing the increased flow of export workers. Therefore, it gave permission to private agencies to coordinate the deployment of workers abroad. The development of recruitment agencies is not only positive. Although recruitment agencies help prospective workers to gain employment abroad, they are often accused of their irregularities and being too concerned with their own profits (Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011).

Since 2008, the recruitment process procedure has two options for prospective FDWs, that of 'direct hiring or through a licensed private recruitment agency' (Ignacio and Meija 2009:38). Direct hiring indicates that a prospective FDW starts its migrant journey without an agency. In this scheme, the prospective FDW still needs documents that are processed at the POEA and other requirements based on 'medical examinations, training assessments, and attending pre-departure seminars (Ignacio and Meija 2009:39). These documents guarantee that the FDW will meet proper labour standards. However, this procedure has loopholes regarding the protection of domestic workers. It allows for irregularities and for unlicensed recruitment agencies to take advantages of domestic workers. The second option involves using licensed private recruitment agencies that help complete all the necessary documents. These agencies have the right to charge fees that are similar to the prospected one month salary. However, following POEA's 'Household Service Workers (HSW) Protection and Welfare Enhancement Reform Package', agencies are forbidden to collect fees 'prior to their departure or in the host country or in the host country via salary deductions'<sup>4</sup> (Ignacio and Meija 2009:39).

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<sup>4</sup> According to the study of Ignacio and Meija (2009) fees can be asked for the feasible tasks by agencies, for example processing the documents of 'passport, police clearance, authentication of contract, birth certificate, medical certificates from exams, trade tests (skills assessments), and OWWA membership' (Ignacio and Meija 2009:39).



As previously mentioned the government has restricted the regulations around the procedures for labour deployment by the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act. However, unlicensed agencies still find ways to ‘bypass certain rules’ (Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011). The procedure of labour deployment begins with the foreign employer. These employers seek contact with an agency to apply for a domestic worker. This agency approaches its counterpart in the Philippines (Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011:12). Recruitment agencies have lists of applicants willing to work as domestic workers abroad. Then the agency arranges a match between the job and the applicant, in which the worker is deployed to the destination country. According to Battistella, Park, and Asis licensed recruitment agencies to blame the issues of domestic workers on the disordered practices and activities from unlicensed recruitment agencies (Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011:12). These unlicensed agencies do not take the welfare or protection of the export workers into account. However, the POEA has set up an anti-illegal recruitment campaign. With this campaign, the Administrative Officer Rustico M. Banal III argues that there are important issues around applying for work abroad. He advises to ‘Call or check with POEA whether the position you are applying for has an approved job order, and transact only with authorizing a representative of a licensed agency’ (Cardenas 2018).

### *2.1.3. The Mission of Migrant Workers*

In the Philippine political scheme, in the 1960s, civil society activism was embodied in the Philippine politics due to depressing social conditions and poverty (Wui and Delias 2015). This led to the setting up of NGOs in churches to promote awareness of the structural substantiation of their problems (Siliman and Noble 1998). Therefore, for a large part, Philippine churches helped to set up NGOs for domestic workers in Hong Kong. Due to the growing numbers of reports on human rights violations against domestic workers in 1980, Filipino activists and religious groups initiated two NGOs to advocate for the protection of domestic workers’ and for their rights (Wui and Delias 2015). This was ‘the Mission of Migrant Workers established in 1981’, and ‘the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) in 1989’ (Wui and Delias 2015:190). The aim of these NGOs is to create opportunities for domestic workers activism in Hong Kong (Wui and Delias 2015). The primary aim of these NGOs was to encourage domestic workers to become active participants in the political space regardless of their marginal position (Wui and Delias 2015:194, Siliman and Noble 1998). Since the handover of Hong Kong to China, the government of Hong Kong approves political assistance for and expressions by activists. The basic law pledged for civil liberties for migrants (Wui and Delias 2015:195). This opportunity was seized by NGOs, where they work together with civil society groups, and also benefit from political opportunities publicly to support their cause and ideas. Some of the civil society groups in Hong Kong supports the NGOs in advocating for better working conditions. Additionally, the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), attempted to create a better understanding of FDWs in the domestic workforce (Wui and Delias 2015:196). NGOs, like the Mission, support organizations like the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-HK).

This is the first covenant of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong. Also, the Mission created its own program called Crisis Intervention and Prevention through Migrant Empowerment the aim which is to educate domestic workers about their rights and other relevant issues. The Mission not only supports domestic workers in Hong Kong but also works together with Migrant International, an association of overseas Filipinos, which ‘has 130 organizations in 23 countries across Asia’ (Wui and Delias 2015:197). To conclude, the efforts of churches in the Philippines, the creation of the Mission and the ACM together with governments intervention shows how training, organizing campaigns and demonstrations offer support for issues concerning migration. (Wui and Delias 2015:197).

#### *2.1.4. Manila Airport*

At the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila, you can find areas for customs arrival and departure especially for Filipino workers that work abroad. Besides, there is a special Labour Assistance Centre with waiting rooms for the FDWs. This centre offers the services of ‘the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PILHEALTH)’ for the overseas workers that start their journey or those returning home (Oishi 2005:83-84). Additionally, during the Christmas season, there is a special procedure for those migrants visiting home. The president welcomes migrants at the Manila airport to stress the importance of labour migrants and its value for the economy of the Philippines (Oishi 2005:84).

#### *2.1.5. The heroes of the society*

In 2004, McKay researched the different patterns of the deployment of workers overseas in a community in the north of the Philippines. Notably, with respect to the migrant women, a shift occurred in their economic and social status. In this community, they were seen as the new local elite. This research emphasizes how cultural capital changes through the status of returned migrants. These women returned with makeup and a new style of dressing. Besides, the ability to buy these resources became a pride for the women (McKay 2005). According to Martin, Abella, and Midgley (2004) the impacts of deployment abroad on ‘families, the economy and communities’ are varied. For example, it often occurs that mothers work abroad as a means of sending their children to school. Although there are many positive effects of migration, the negative effect of migration includes relatives becoming ‘dependent on remittances’. As a result, they may stop attempting to ‘improve their own lives’ (Martin, Abella, and Midgley).

Nevertheless, communities are generally positive about having their families work abroad. Several studies (Rodriquez 2010, and Martin, Abella and Midgley 2004) show that the national government, the press and their communities respect migrants. They often treat migrant workers as national heroes for migrating to a strange land and sending part of their salaries back home.

Therefore, returned migrants are treated with respect and welcomed home for their hard work (Martin, Abella, and Midgley 2004:1545). Especially after the president Cory Aquino represent migrants that seek employment abroad as ‘national heroes’. Declaring that they ‘sacrifice their family lives for economic improvement of their kin and their country’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). To conclude, Rodriguez argues that as migrants are ‘described as heroes’, they are expected to be ‘law-abiding, diligent workers’ in their destination countries and so to ‘positively represent the Philippines’ (Rodriguez 2010: XVII).

## 2.2. Case 2 Indonesia as the sending country

In Southeast Asia, besides the Philippines, Indonesia is one of the major emigration nations sending large numbers of migrant workers to the Middle East, and to the East and Southeast Asia. Since ‘the Asian financial crisis around 1990’, that coincided with ‘the political-economic crisis’ in Indonesia ‘the government promoted the exportation of female labour’ (Constable 2009:148). Since then, new areas especially in the domestic area, are popular among female migrant workers. These Asian destination sites include Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Goh, Wee, and Yeoh argue that there is a significant demand for Indonesian domestic workers (Goh, Wee and Yeoh 2017). The Asian Migrant Centre estimated that Indonesian FDWs comprise 47% of Hong Kong’s migrant domestic workforce (Asian Migrant Centre 2015). After the Philippines, Indonesia has grown over the last fifteen years as a large migrant labour export country (Constable 2009). Rudnyckyj conducted ethnographic research on the transnational labour migration in Indonesia. In Indonesia, ‘poor, young women’ from ‘rural parts of Java, Lombok, and Sumatra’ are the most prevailing type seeking ‘deployment abroad’ to improve their ‘living conditions’ (Rudnyckyj 2004:409).

### 2.2.1. *Indonesia’s Overseas Labour Migration Program*

In contrast to the Philippines government, the Indonesian government has been slower to adopt and implement effective programs and policies to promote and protect their overseas workers (Ignacio and Meija 2009:42). However, to escape the high degree of domestic unemployment and the endeavour of educated workers seeking work with high wages in around 1969, the government of Indonesia implemented a five-year economic development plan (Firdausy 2005:8). This plan included the numbers of labour migrants it wants to send overseas. It also revealed how more Indonesian women than Indonesian men wanted to work abroad (Rahman and Fee 109). The number of transnational labour migrants in ‘the first five-year plan was limited’. However, the second plan called for nearly ‘20.000 labour migrants’, and ‘the third plan included almost 100.000 labour migrants’ (Hugo 1993:42). This illustrates how the government is improving the migration program. Furthermore, Palmer argues that Indonesian bureaucrats have a reputation for ignoring procedures in their own favour (Palmer 2016), meaning that in return for bribes they grant exemptions or ignore

disturbing information. The study of Palmer also showed that the administration of the government that deals with overseas labour migration programs are frequently corrupt and negligent in their relationship with migrants and the recruiters. Between 1969 and 2010 the overseas labour migration program of Indonesia has been adapted several times, in response to changes in the migration flows (Firdausy 2005 and Palmer 2016). This program started around the 1960s, whereby, a system was developed to generally find volunteers to migrate to popular destination countries. The aim was to fill the gap for the lack of adequate gainful employment in popular cities, such as Java (Palmer 2016:21) and, to develop a new source of foreign exchange revenue.

In 2006, the government implemented a directorate, called ‘the National Board for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TKI)’, which was established to improve the welfare of migrants (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S139). According to Xiang and Lindquist, this directorate was developed to ‘coordinate government activities, both on the national and provincial levels’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S139). Since there were many incidents of abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment, the government became less enthusiastic to send women for domestic work overseas (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). The policies provided by the government include one whereby licensed recruiters are not permitted to directly contact women for domestic worker abroad. Also, the government halted the deployment of several overseas workers ‘to increase the national protection abroad’ (Ignacio & Meija 2008:43). Referring to the governmental approach to the recruitment fees, ‘the Migrant Placement and Protection Law of Indonesia’ implies that the fees should only reflect the costs that can be identified through the costs of processing the required documents (Ignacio and Meija 2009:43). The standard rates, which prospective FDWs were obligated to pay remains ambiguous (Palmer 2016:22). However, intermediaries which are mostly local patrons, that are trusted by the villagers are utilized informal networks to contact women for work abroad. When they contact women that are willing to work overseas, the local patron ‘contact field agents representing recruitment offices’ (Spaan 1994, Lindquist 2010:125, Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). Thus, although the Indonesian government aims to have a low profile in the recruitment process, intermediaries are actively involved. This reveals how the formal (regulatory) and informal (commercial) infrastructures are intertwined.

### *2.2.2. Recruitment agencies in Indonesia*

In contrast to the situation in the Philippines, ‘the government intervention on recruitment and deployment process’ has not been governed by vast amounts of regulations (Ignacio and Meija 2008, Palmer 2016, and Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). Regarding the commercialized infrastructure, the recruitment and placement of overseas domestic workers are organized by ‘private agencies, called ‘Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (PJTKI) (Ignacio & Meija 2008:43). Notably, in response to the liberalization of the economy after the downfall of Suharto in 1997, there was an increase in the number of labour recruitment companies together with the expansion of migration bureaucracy (Xiang

and Lindquist S139). Nevertheless, news spread in communities of the repeating abuse, which brought attention to concentrate on the “protection” of migrants. For example, in August 1999, the international airport of Jakarta established a migration reception at the terminal for domestic workers who have been abused. As the involvement of intermediaries intensified, in 2013, Indonesia had 546 licensed recruitment companies including around 4.000 offices throughout the country. Besides, there is a growing number of “field agents” active in these offices. There are multiple requirements to receive a license. Firstly, agencies need ‘to pay 50.000 US dollar’, and secondly, they need to implement ‘compulsory pre-departure training’ as well as ‘a rigid process of documentation’ (Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

Additionally, the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, Jacob Nuwawea, reported in the Jakarta Post in 2001 that ‘government will continue focusing on two main strategies, sending more maids overseas and maximizing domestic sectors to create more vacancies’. Nevertheless, he argues that the intention of the government is to slowly withdraw from the transmigration program. According to him ‘more and more people are able to migrate on their own’ (Jakarta Post 2001). Whenever someone wants to migrate, they need to participate in an intensive process of training and documentation (Xiang and Lindquist S140). For instance, ‘Samudra Cahaya Raya (SCR)’, a company that sends workers abroad, ‘offers training and education’ to obtain the necessary documents (Rudnyckyj 2004:408). Through these companies, the worker is immediately in a debt relationship as the training is expensive. Therefore, the revenues of the worker go directly to these companies to pay the costs (Rudnyckyj 2004:417). These trainings are mandatory to receive a certification from the Bureau of Labour Training, which they need when to leave Indonesia for Hong Kong. While undergoing the training certification, the worker also receives a passport (from the Department of Immigration) as well as a visa (from the embassy of the receiving county). Regrettably, recruitment agencies often elude these procedures (Palmer 2016). In these situations, they obtain the required documents as a bribe to get more money from domestic workers (Rudnyckyj 2004).

Presently, the role in the pre-departure stage for domestic workers has been devolved to agencies with a licensing scheme, Surat Izin Pelaksana Penempatan (SIPPTKI) (Ignacio & Meija 2008:43). Relating to the BNP2TKI, the National Board for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers, several line-ministries cooperate with agencies in the process of overseas job placement (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Xiang and Lindquist argue how such examples demonstrate the integration of the commercial and regulatory infrastructure. Establishment of the humanitarian infrastructure works similarly, as outlined in the next paragraph.

### 2.2.3. *The Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers*

In explaining humanitarian infrastructure, I briefly discuss how this should be described in relation to the commercial and regulatory infrastructure instead of a counteract. For example, Rudnyckyj argues that NGOs in Indonesia that advocate for the rights of domestic workers are eager

to work with the state (Rudnyckyj 2018:407). Following the end of the Suharto regime, NGOs emerged to advocate for better rights for migrants in Indonesia's civil society (Heyanto and Mandal 2003). These NGOs demand that the government of Indonesia take a greater responsibility in protecting the legal safeguards for FDWs. Demanding this responsibility was stimulated by several cases in which domestic workers abroad were accused of committing crimes or where frequently the subject of abuse (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). In order to do so, NGOs seek to change the 'moral economy', that is empowered by the patron-client networks (Rudnyckyj 2004). NGOs advocate for a broader 'rationalized relationship' that guarantee 'the physical and legal security' of the domestic workers abroad (Rudnyckyj 2004:424). This indicates to the urgency of legal protection, stricter regulations on the scrutiny of private companies, as well as more involvement of government agencies in the training and the transnational mobility of domestic workers.

Although these NGOs are based in Indonesia, in Hong Kong the Mission supports the Indonesian domestic workers in forming their own organization, 'the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong' (AKTI) (Constable 2009:197). In October 2000, the Association of Indonesian Migrant workers (AKTI-HK) was established to promote a mass movement of Indonesian migrant workers to Hong Kong (Constable 2009). This NGO arranges a series of campaigns or initiatives that oppose anti-migrant policies of both the Indonesian and Hong Kong governments. Additionally, the deployment of labour overseas has been a sensitive subject in the public debate (Rudnyckyj 2004:409). Newspapers show that the increasing demand for domestic labour coincides with the publicized incidents of exploitation and abuse in Indonesia. Therefore, NGOs advocate for a tighter overview of governmental activities and more interventions in the transnational labour migration process. Heryanto and Mandal argue that in the political context at the end of the Suharto regime, NGOs appeared to advocate for the civil rights of Indonesian domestic workers abroad (Heryanto and Mandal 2003). Additionally, NGOs focus on the migratory process that starts with the proceedings of brokers (Rudnyckyj 2004). NGOs are proponents for the implementation of legal protections and tighter interference in the practices of recruiting, training and transports of migrants. Some of the main problems in the process of migration are the use of false documents and corruption. Therefore, 'reforming the governmental bureaucracy poses a major challenge for NGOs' (Rudnyckyj 2004:409). To conclude, this shows how NGOs in Indonesia have difficulty in tackling the problem of patron-client networks. Thus far, the intentions of NGOs have not led to the involvement of the state in practices of recruitment, training and transportation. As long as licensed and unlicensed recruitment agencies and brokers are in power to regulate migration, NGOs will experience difficulty in accomplishing their goals.

#### *2.2.4. Soekarno-Hatta airport*

As previously discussed, the privatization of migration control refers to the increased use of airplanes and airports. In Indonesia, the Soekarno-Hatta Airport is the airport that it is the gateway for

FDWs to leave or re-enter Indonesia. In 2008, the Indonesian government created a building that offers services for the returning migrants, the so-called 'Terminal 4' (Kloppenburg 2013). One of the reasons for the government to build this was to protect returned migrants from malpractices during their journey home. According to Kloppenburg, next to the creation of Terminal 4, the Indonesian government implemented a regulation for the returned migrant workers arriving at the Soekarno-Hatta-airport (Kloppenburg 2013).

“[The] return of Indonesian migrant workers always includes the risk that inhumane treatment takes place, starting at the moment [the workers] arrive and put their feet on Tanah Air [our motherland] as foreign revenue heroes. The image of the migrant workers is that they bring home a lot of money, but that their ability to protect themselves is low. This makes them susceptible to fraud, looked down upon, and subject to cruel deeds by irresponsible people” (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008, translated by Kloppenburg 2013:113).

This regulation had to be implemented after the shocking stories of migrants being kidnapped or disappearing after they arrived at this airport. The government acknowledges that it is their responsibility to offer services to help the returned migrant workers (Kloppenburg 2013). Therefore, they have provided some services at the airports that help the authorities to locate the returned labour migrant. This airport offers help by providing the opportunity for returned migrant workers to go through a special migrant lane to enter a special migrant building. In this building, they receive medical or administrative help (Kloppenburg 2013:114). The way in which returned labour migrants are protected and provided services for a safe journey back home shows the relationship between regulatory and technological infrastructure.

#### 2.2.5. *Foreign revenue heroes or the vulnerable group?*

According to Hugo (1995), social network's play an important role for the transnational migrants. Not only do they play a part in the decision-making process or the movement but also in the support and assistance when FDWs are settling into their new country. Nevertheless, returned migrant labourers play a huge role in the decision of others to migrate (Constable 2009). The relative wealth and new houses of returned migrants inspire new prospective workers to seek for work abroad (Rudnyckyj 2004:417). However, as previously mentioned, returned migrants are a vulnerable group in society.

Concerning the start of the migration process. Rudnyckyj states that the local broker plays a crucial role in facilitating the mobility of migrants (Rudnyckyj 2004:414). In his study, he argues that in most cases the local patron is a respected figure in the community (village head, a successful local businessman or a religious leader, Rudnyckyj 2004:414). The local patron, or broker supplies loans to people that want to work abroad and brings them into contact with recruitment agencies (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). As described in the literature review patron-client network is set up in Asia when a state is not involved in the recruitment process. Rudnyckyj argues that in some aspects the

relationship between the broker and the migrant labour can be similar to that of the patron-client network. However, after interviewing a local NGO activist Rudnycky reported that ‘after a broker lends the money and sends them to Jakarta, that’s it. If there is a problem they do not know what to do’ (Rudnycky 2004:415). This illustrates how the broker is not concerned with the well-being of the “client”. The process of recruitment in Indonesia is mostly informal as the recruitment agencies rarely recruit workers.

## Section III

### 3. Comparison analysis

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the situations in the Philippines and Indonesia are constructed in the society of Hong Kong and focuses on their empowerment in the economy of globalization. By implementing a qualitative comparison analysis (QCA), I draw on the theoretical concept of migration infrastructure as a tool to understand the impact on Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers. Through implementing a QCA, I discovered two important factors in the migration infrastructure. Firstly, in both countries migration is a new form of strategy for the local communities. Secondly, with the pressure of the growing migration infrastructure, governments are pushed to decentralize migration. However, these states differ in their reactions to the decentralization of migration.

#### *Regulatory infrastructure*

In terms of control measures and policies, both governments have formulated and reformulated several policies as a response to pressure from recruitment agencies, business interests, NGOs, employers, and trade unions. This shows how the growing migration industry puts states under some pressure. The demand for labour in developed countries and the labour supply in developing countries result in migration management being devolved to non-state actors. This creates opportunities for private agencies to participate in ‘the promotion, controlling and facilitating of labour migration in varying degrees’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:690). The outcome of analysing the migration infrastructure of the Philippines shows how the policy discourse fluctuates between the protection and promotion of domestic workers. Also, these two aims sometimes conflict, because of the stories regarding poor treatment by some employers. Often, the promotion overrules protection since protection can cause complications in deployment procedures in.



The regulation of infrastructure of the Philippines with that of Indonesia requires comparison. Since 2006, the POEA has reformulated several policies to enhance the protection of its export workers<sup>5</sup> in the Philippines.

The discourse of policy towards migration implies a combination of more advantages for domestic workers together with supplementary training requirements (Battistella, Park and Asis 2011:10). According to Asis, ‘the government facilitates migration, regulates the operations of the recruitment agencies, and looks out for the rights of its migrant workers’ (Asis 2006). It shows how the culture of migration has been fostered through the institutionalization of migration.

Although, the Indonesian president created a migration program as a way to support this new source of foreign exchange revenue, in 2004, the government implemented legislation that overrode the migration program (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). This legislation controls government agencies with respect to the recruitment industry. This shows how in Indonesia decentralization of the government creates the opportunity for the private sector to become involved in a large way in the migration services market. To compare with the Philippines, the Indonesian migration infrastructure is less institutionalized, instead they seek a ‘low profile’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). According to Spaan and van Naerssen the outcome of this low-profile is that a large number of domestic workers work with unlicensed agents, who are seeking for loopholes in the regulations to perform illegal practices (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). They argue that irregular migrations in Indonesia often occur due to the ‘costly and time-consuming requirements and regulations set-up by the government’ (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:682). Rother argues, that in many cases not only are domestic workers exploited by their employers, but also by Indonesia and its migration industry, ‘both before departure (in many cases leading to debt bondage) and after migrants return (Rother 2017:857). The domestic workers that emigrate through government channels who are supposed to protect and assist in the destination country through the following three actors; the consulate general, the Indonesian embassy and private agencies (Rother 2017). However, through conducted interviews by Rudnyckyj (2004), Wee and Sim (2004), and (Rother 2017) Indonesian domestic workers feel little support and protection from their government. Instead, they believe that their government wants to control them.

### *Commercial infrastructure*

In terms of the commercial infrastructure, there are differences between Indonesia and the Philippines regarding the lack of monitoring of the migration process. In Indonesia, the Indonesian government compels domestic workers to apply to licensed recruitment agencies (Sukamdi 2008).

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<sup>5</sup> To sum, reforms of policies decisions includes, ‘setting the minimum age at 23 years old, requiring departing domestic workers to complete a National Certificate for Household Workers (HSW-NCII) issued by the Technical Educational Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and country specific Language and Culture Certificate of Competence or attendance issued by OWWA, waiving the payment of placement fees, and requiring a minimum monthly salary of US\$400’ (Battistella, Park and Asis 2011:10).

Often there is a risk that these recruitment agencies themselves ‘form a cartel’ (Rother 2017). In 2004, the Indonesian government formulized Article 34 for the ‘Placement and Protection of Migration Workers’ which states that prospective migrants are obligated to get an understanding of the required documents they need, their rights, the recruitment process and the situation and risks in the migration country (Rother 2017:963). Subsequently, for domestic workers, there is a special regulation. In order to be able to carry out the standard tasks they will perform, they will be trained in training facilities that are supervised by recruitment agencies (Rudnyckyj 2004, Ford 2005, Rother 2017).

According to Ford (2005) and Rudnyckyj (2004), the prospective domestic workers are regularly held in these training facilities for an unreasonable time and under difficult circumstances. Around 300 training camps in Indonesia prepare prospective domestic workers for the work that waits for them in the destination country (Rother 2017:963). This is in contrast to the Philippines, which since 1978 gave permission to private recruitment agencies to coordinate the recruitment process and deployment abroad. The government is highly involved in the process of recruitment through strict regulations, anti-illegal recruitment campaign, and thus offers its support in the commercial infrastructure. This may be a reason why Filipinos are often better prepared for migration than Indonesians.

### *Social infrastructure*

Across Southeast Asia, growing ‘rural participation’ in global flows of labour migration, information and technology ‘change transnational networks’ that modify the communities in rural areas, their ‘livelihood and future trajectories’ (Mckay 2005: 90). In the scheme of globalization and economic development, both governments recognize the economic advantages of the remittances migrants send back. The president of the Philippines, Cory Aquino refers to domestic workers as heroes to how migration is embodied in the Philippine culture as a way of achieving a better life (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018:685). The Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono also called migrants ‘foreign exchange heroes’ and acknowledges how the recruitment agencies overcharge prospective migrants and encourage illegal migration (Ignacio and Meija 2009:42).

Although the remittances contribute to the status of ‘national heroes’, this phrase does not impact the position of domestic workers as ‘a transnational manifold marginalized group’ (Rother 2017: 969). On the other hand, it does show how remittances are brought into their home communities and transform rural areas into remittance landscapes (McKay 2005:89). For instance, McKay argues that in the Philippine remittances are used as investments. Also, Rahman and Fee argue that ‘in 2005, Indonesian migrant workers sent home some \$2.9 billion in remittances’ that is used in the household families (Rahman and Fee 2009:109). In both countries, globalization is a new strategy in local communities that lead to changes both in the sending and receiving countries. Relating back to the migrant networks as a mean to encourage prospective FDWs to migrate. Amrith revealed how

Indonesian women use migration as a means to avoid bad relationships with people in their community (Amrith 2015). Whereas, migration can be an opportunity to start over.

Comparing the social infrastructures, it is evident that migration is embodied in the culture of both countries. The development of a culture of migration in the Philippines has been encouraged both publicly and privately. Philippine publicity reveals how the media and the press view domestic workers (Spaan and Naerssen 2018). Several newspapers and billboards advertise that seeking employment abroad is a useful strategy for attaining a better life. In Indonesia, the press and media play a smaller role in the promotion and seeking of employment in other countries (Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). However, Lindquist and Spaan argue that since this limited advertising of the press does not mean that people do not get encouraged to go abroad. In Indonesia, it is usually brokers and migration networks that stimulate people to apply for jobs abroad (Lindquist 2012 and Spaan 1994). The recruitment process in Indonesia is generally informal through brokers, which have little interest in the well-being of the prospective domestic workers. This illustrates how patron-client networks are embodied in the migration culture of Indonesia. This is in contrast to the institutionalization of migration in the Philippines.

### *Humanitarian infrastructure*

The in-depth analysis shows the different ways in which the humanitarian infrastructure approaches the issue of the domestic workers and advocates for their rights. Evidence of the numbers of Filipinos and Indonesian that are abused or exploited is unfortunately lacking. However, numerous studies (Constable 2009, Ignacio and Mejia 2008, Wui and Delias 2015, Rother 2017, and Spaan and van Naerssen 2018) show how Indonesian domestic workers are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than Filipinos. According to the AMC: ‘the cross-tabulation reveals that the Indonesian FDHs [foreign domestic helpers] are the worst-affected by wage violations’. Indeed, ‘almost 48% per cent of them are underpaid. This problem is low among Thais (less than 4 per cent), and almost absent among Filipinos (less than 1 per cent)’ (AMC 2001, 27). By comparing the humanitarian infrastructure there is a relationship between the transnational political space between the Philippines, Indonesia, and Hong Kong. Since the Indonesian domestic workers arriving in Hong Kong are able to organize themselves through the help of the Filipino group, the Mission. According to Erel, this is a new manner of production and reproduction by being ‘cultural capital that builds on, rather than simply mirrors, power relations of either the country of origin or the country of migration’ (Erel 2010:642). Through the channel of the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI) in Hong Kong, Indonesian succeed in bringing back their knowledge of the Mission to Indonesia and to other destinations (Rother 2017).

Constable argues that both Filipinos and Indonesians operate in organizations and participate in protests. After examining the consulate hopping protest on 15 December 2005, Constable finds three significant changes that have appeared between 1990 and 2005 (Constable 2009). Firstly, there

are more Indonesian domestic workers attending protests than in 1990. Secondly, there has been a proliferation of unions, grassroots organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Thirdly, the focus of the protest has changed in the time range (Constable 2009). The protest back in 1990 focused on labour matters that domestic workers had to deal with. In contrast, the consulate hopping protest focused more on human rights. According to the findings of Constable, an Indonesian woman noted that domestic workers have become aware of their rights and ‘the legality of labour organization in Hong Kong’ (Constable 2009:149). In the Philippines, the proliferation of NGOs has occurred together with increased interventions by the Philippine government (Ignacio and Mejia 2008 and Wui and Delias 2015). At the beginning of the 1990s, shelters were built in Hong Kong to offer protection to those who had been laid off, underpaid, abused or waiting to hear if they could stay or must leave (Ignacio and Mejia 2008, Constable 2009, Wui and Delias 2015).

Also, the Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO) in Hong Kong, together with the Philippine Consulate, ‘provides counseling, 24-hours shelter, and conciliation for FDWs who are terminated prior to the completion of their two-year contract’ (Ignacio and Mejia 2009:39-40). With the growing number of Indonesian domestic workers, Constable reported that the numbers of Filipinos abuses declined. Simultaneously, the numbers of abuses of Indonesian domestic workers grew and they got support in the shelters run by Filipino activists (Constable 2009:151). This demonstrates how the Mission, POLO and the Philippine Consulate can be seen as a vehicle for empowerment giving FDWs options to reclaim their lives by leaving their employer and find shelter rather than having to stay in situations of abuse or exploitation.

### *Technological infrastructure*

In terms of the technological infrastructure, the improvement of public-private collaboration in regulating transnational migration implies a relationship between new workforces regarding governments and airports. It refers to the development of security checks on airports, as well as the use of the register traveller programs and the airline date in migration control (Kloppenburger 2013:90). Nowadays most migrants travel directly by airplane (Xiand and Lindquist 2018). The logistical problem that shows how the technological infrastructure comes to play in the migration infrastructure occurs prior to the departure and arrival processes. New regulations are enforced to manage air travel. Both the Soekarno-Hatta airport in Indonesia and the Manila airport in the Philippines are the gateways to enter and re-enter the respective countries. Both airports offer special needs for returning domestic workers (Oishi 2005 and Kloppenburger 2013). Manila airport also offers services for domestic workers starting their journey (Oishi 2005). Therefore, this is another example of how the Philippine government pays more attention to the protection and promotion of the well-being of its export migrants.

### *3.2 Brief discussion of findings*

Both the cases studies of the Philippines and of Indonesia show how domestic workers are marginalized groups that are disempowered by Hong Kong, particularly regarding how they are deceived from their contractual or legal rights. Also, they are ranked as second-class citizens in Hong Kong as they cannot apply for permanent residency. Since reports on human rights violation have grown, multiple NGOs and grassroots organizations have been set up to support domestic workers. In terms of the empowerment of FDWs in Hong Kong, several studies argue that the reports of Filipinos FDWs being abused or maltreated is declining (Constable 2009:151, Rudnyckyj 2004, Tan Soen 2006, Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011, Palmer 2016, Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). Unfortunately, however, this coincides with an increasing number of reports of violations of Indonesian FDWs.

In comparison with the Indonesian government, the Philippines provides better tools for prospective FDWs to work abroad. This contributes to some Filipinos being ‘fairly well-equipped for their new lives in the global city’ in contrast to Indonesian ‘who rarely have experience in political organizing, possessing limited English skills’ (Rother 2017:957) leaving them more vulnerable for violations. As stated, both Indonesian and Filipinos FDWs participate in numerous political protests and organizations, which have a positive effect on their well-being.

In terms of empowerment, the case study of the Philippines demonstrates how, the activities, practices and the formation and implementation of policies have a major role in the lives of FDWs. For example, through strict regulations in the Philippines, government interventions, and the proliferation of the Mission and the POLO offer shelter and protection for people in ‘who is terminated prior to the complication of their two-year contract’ (Ignacio and Meija 2009 and Constable 2009). FDWs are supported to participate in the protests, leave dangerous situations, and are provided workshops to help them build lives in Hong Kong (Constable 2009 and Wui and Delias 2015). This is in contrast with the situation in Indonesian where FDWs acknowledge that they view the Indonesian government as the enemy (Sim 2009). Indonesian FDWs activist view ‘their government as their worst enemy’ (Sim 2009:71). However, it is important to understand that migration itself is a tool to create opportunities for empowerment, socio-cultural change and freedom (Amrith 2015).

Besides, according to Amrith, in the new country, opportunities derive from new friendships, education courses that they can be paid for through remittances, and most importantly ‘new patterns of consumption’ (Amrith 2015:9). Amrith states ‘the journeys of migrant women are bound up with the desire to realise multiple aspirations and rest day away from their employer’s home are crucial in enabling them space, time and freedom to achieve this’ (Amrith 2015:9). Therefore, it may be argued that empowerment through protest and awareness has a limited effect on well-being because state and recruitment agencies which may work against empowerment are unavoidable key players. Also, policies of Hong Kong that strengthen and amplify disempowerment are still in place.

## Conclusion

*'Does the migration infrastructure of the Philippines and Indonesia empower foreign domestic workers (FDWs), and if so, how and to what extent are they empowered?'*

Developing a migration infrastructure definitely has a positive impact on foreign domestic workers and their livelihoods. State and non-state actors both contribute to the establishment of such a migration culture. The assumption that a high migration infrastructure, 'a state that receives multiple fees from different stakeholders, which allows the state to support institutions that protect migrant workers' (Ignacio and Meija 2009:21) is in place in the Philippine case. However, the case study of Indonesia, demonstrates how economic instrumentality seems more important than the protection of human rights. As the recruitment process in Indonesia is in the control of a migrant services market, creating opportunities to take advantages of this vulnerable group. The Philippine government focuses more on the self-empowerment of domestic workers through local and national government interventions on both the sending and receiving countries. This corroborates with the studies that show how the numbers of abuse cases of Filipino FDWs are declining and the numbers for Indonesian FDWs are growing (Constable 2009:151, Rudnyckyj 2004, Battistella, Park, and Asis 2011, Palmer 2016, Spaan and van Naerssen 2018). Therefore, in this thesis, I have shown how migration itself, remittances, and all of the actors involved, change the living situation of domestic workers. This is in line with the view of Castles (2003 and 2004) who report that the forces that drive transnational migration are intensively complex and are completely enshrined in process of 'globalization' and 'social transformation' (Castles 2003 and 2004).

In conclusion, this study shows how the configurations of migration infrastructure interact depending on the attitude of the state, its policy formation, and implementation. The empowerment of FDWs depends on how the configurations of the migration infrastructure are connected and even work together. Healthy collaborations create opportunities for FDWs to empower themselves in Hong Kong. Comparing the migrant policies of Indonesia with those of the Philippines, we can conclude that especially the formation and implementation of the Indonesian government policies contradict and restrict leading to unpredictable and sometimes undesirable outcomes for Indonesian domestic workers. Furthermore, in this thesis, I bring two important aspects of FDWs to the fore. Firstly, it is crucial to view domestic workers in a broader understanding of migration, for example by also examining the migration infrastructure with its deep-rooted dynamics (Constable 2003, and Gammeltoft-Hanes and Nyberg Sørensen 2013, and Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Secondly, it is important to understand the flow of domestic workers as an integral part of the relationship between the sending and receiving countries.

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