Family, Politics and Remittances: The Roles of Social Relations in Central Javanese Labour Migration
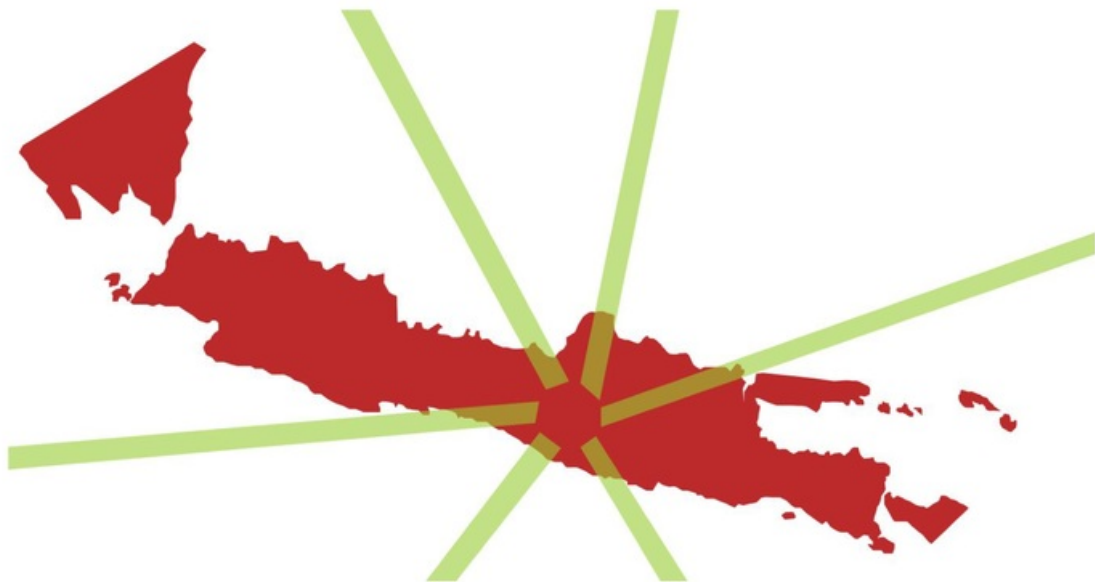
door Kjell Winkens

Family, Politics, and Remittances

The roles of social relations in Central Javanese labour migration

Master Thesis

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the beginning of February 2016, I found myself in the house of the village head of Cedhaksolo, in the Karanganyar regency of Central Java, Indonesia. Present were about a dozen villagers, some alone, some brought their spouses or children that day, who at some point in their lives left the village to work abroad. The purpose of the meeting that day, besides being a social gathering, including the compulsory sweet tea and snacks, was to discuss my research intentions there. While sitting cross-legged on a large bamboo mat on the concrete floor of the house, I introduced myself to the group of people who would become my main informants during the next month-and-a-half.

The main purpose of my stay in Indonesia was to do a three-month fieldwork as part of my master's degree in anthropology. Because of my interest in migration studies, and because Indonesia has always been a country of interest to me, not to mention the fact that my home university organised a field school there, I decided to study Indonesian (ex-) labour migrants. I thereby focused on how their migration period took shape, but most importantly also what the effects of these migration periods were when these migrants eventually returned home. I hereby for example looked at often cited results of migration like an increase in economic resources for migrants, an higher 'standing' or prestige within their community, but for example also changes in social relations (improvements or straining, for example) because of those remittances.

During my stay in Indonesia I visited people across Central Java, spoke to NGOs, policy-makers, migrants, and their families; visited people's homes, joined workshops and trainings, and did so many more things that are too long to describe here, but I will discuss further in the next parts. This thesis is the result.

In this thesis I will describe my research, but most importantly will also try to explain and document the results of it. I initially went into the field to try and answer the question: 'What are the factors influencing the control over remittances of return migrants in Surakarta after their migration period(s)?'. In the following parts I will answer this question, whereby I will focus specifically on the social relations that influence not only the ways in which a migration period takes shape, but also influence the eventual control over, or availability of, the remittances that are a result of it. In order to do so I will apply concepts like family and community relations, remittance obligations, and (bargaining) power to highlight different social and economic aspects of labour migration. I will also describe the broader socio-economic and political structures, both in Indonesia, and in the migrants' destination countries that influence the ability to earn, and bargain over, these remittances.

1.1. Societal Relevance

With my thesis I want to make a (small) contribution to an ever-growing public debate on labour migration. Speaking from a Dutch context, significant amounts of labour migrants have been present in the country during the greater part of the post-Second World War period, and public and political attitudes towards them has changed over the years, sometimes towards the more 'tolerant' side, sometimes towards the opposite. However, in my opinion, the public debate often only focusses on 'our' side of the story. The impact of migration on The Netherlands and its labour market, for example, is an oft-debated topic. However, with this thesis, I want to give a glimpse into the other side of migration, by showing the impact of migration on the migrants themselves. I want to show how migrants experience migration, its benefits and drawbacks, but most importantly also, how this period of migration affects them when they return home. Does migration, for example, always lead to an increase in economic resources? And how do they themselves talk about their experiences abroad?

Furthermore, during talks with (Indonesian) policy makers I noticed that migration is often seen as a very individualistic practice, whereby the decision to migrate in the first place is solely made by the migrants themselves, and their success or failure depends on their own actions (or, in the case of success, on good policy-making), and their own personality. However, in this thesis I argue for a more nuanced view on migration. Migrants are, of course, part of broader structures that to a certain degree determine their possible choice of actions, but they still have the agency to decide on their own actions. I thereby primarily argue that the social relations of migrants, especially with their family members, also play an important role in deciding if, and how, a migrant moves abroad, and what happens when they return. As Indonesia is a relatively large supplier of labour migrants in Asia, I therefore also think, and hope, that an analysis of the (factors influencing the) outcomes that labour migration can have for those migrants, and the effects of Indonesia's migration policy, could be useful for Indonesian policy-makers and (prospective) migrants.

1.2. Academic Relevance

Besides having been broadly discussed in the public debate, there is also an extensive body of work on labour migration in (anthropological) academic circles. With this thesis I want to contribute to a few of the academic debates that try to conceptualise the different aspects of labour migration. I will do this based on three main concepts that I used during my fieldwork, and the writing of this thesis: social networks and motivations to migrate, remittance obligations, and bargaining power. I hereby focus on for example a migrant's family and community relations, and the power relations inherent in those, to explain how a migration period is shaped, and how the results in terms of remittances are influenced. By connecting this theoretical framework of my research (see chapter two) to the

empirical data I gathered in the field, I want to contribute to a growing body of literature on topics like transnational family relations, social dimensions of remittance practices, and power relations and reciprocity within migration processes.

1.3. Notes on the field

While I try to place my research in a broader, Central Javanese context, and I had respondents in multiple parts of this province, I will mostly write about one specific case study I did during my research: my research in Cedhaksolo village, which I referred to briefly in the previous part. Cedhaksolo is a village of a few thousand people, and is part of the Karanganyar regency in Central Java. Surrounded by rice fields, a large percentage of the population (historically) work in the agricultural sector, though the (garment) factories in nearby Karanganyar City also provide jobs for an increasingly large percentage of the population. Official statistics from the Karanganyar regency for example show that thirty four percent of the local workforce worked in agriculture in 2013, while fourty three percent of the regency's economic income came from industry (Kabupaten Karanganyar 2013). However, missing data entries, and for example much lower numbers of migrants (between 436 and 268 during 2011 and 2013) than I expected, make me somewhat doubt the accuracy of these statistics.

However, while I might not have accurate statistics to validate the claim (though the aforementioned statistics say that around one percent of the total workforce was unemployed in 2013), unemployment was reasonably high at the time that I visited the village, or at least it was perceived as such by my respondents. Especially for people with only the lowest, compulsory, levels of education, I was told, it was difficult to find a job close to their homes.

Even without statistical data, I would hereby argue that this perception of a high possibility of unemployment for lower-educated people might, for the purpose of my research, also have a large impact with regards to viewing migration abroad as a viable opportunity to find work. While the region of Karanganyar might not have always been seen as able to provide jobs for its inhabitants, stories about successful migrants spread across the community and, coupled with often higher wages abroad, this might provide the motivation for (unemployed) people to move abroad. Recruiters from job agencies thereby also were often going into the villages to offer people jobs abroad. One of my respondents even told me that at her high school (an SMK, a vocational high school), recruiters from job agencies would show up at graduation, to almost certainly guarantee jobs for the newly graduates. Migration became an accepted way to start a career, or to provide for one's family.

Though, despite the apparent need for job agencies and the like to facilitate migration, up until a few years ago, there were no offices to be found in Karangayar. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, job

agents would periodically come to the villages to recruit people for companies abroad. The prospective migrants then, if they accepted the offer, had to go to Jakarta for the training, or the completion of the application for the migration period abroad, or at least in the case of the migrants I spoke to. Just to put things a bit more into perspective, and to give an idea of the distances between locations in Indonesia, Cedhaksolo is about 950 kilometers from Jakarta, which is only the half-way point if the job application abroad succeeds.

I wanted to do my research on Java because historically speaking, Java has always been a centre for (foreign) labour migration in Indonesia. Its high population density, augmented by (colonial) government policy and the efforts of recruitment agencies (Hugo 1993: 37) resulted in Javanese being historically the largest ethnic group of Indonesia's transnational labour migrant population (Spaan 1994: 97). In early 2016, Java was still the place of origin of the largest percentage of labour migrants to leave Indonesia, according to the statistics from the BNP2TKI (*Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*, the national body for the placement and protection of migrant workers), with about twenty percent of the total migrant population originating from Central Java (BNP2TKI 2016: 4).

When I wrote my research proposal, I planned to study migrants in the city of Solo (or Surakarta, as it is also known). As I mentioned earlier, the whole of Java has a relatively high percentage of migrants, so I did not assume that the location I chose would have an extremely large impact on the amount of respondents I could find, or that there would be large differences between migrant communities in locations across Java. I therefore initially chose Solo to do research in, because I already had established contacts there, and because with the relatively small time-span of my research (around two, or two and a half months), I thought the fast way to start my research was by using the contacts I already had. However, I soon found that while there was a small amount of migrants living in Solo, my NGO-contacts in the city had little to no contacts with them. Instead, I was brought into contact with the wife of Cedhaksolo's village head, and the bulk of my research moved to the Karanganyar regency adjacent to Solo.

In hindsight, this move to Cedhaksolo was not detrimental to my research. As I mentioned earlier, the village has just a few thousand inhabitants. While my study there will therefore probably not be representative of the whole of the migrant population of Central Java, let alone for the hundreds of thousands of migrants in the whole of Indonesia, the choice for a relatively small village gave me the opportunity to do a more demarcated case study which gave me more opportunities to compare migrants that worked in different countries.

Because I am primarily focussing on the effects of migration after a migrant returned home, this demarcation also allowed me to make comparisons between migrants that went to different countries. Because the village of origin was then the same between my respondents, and general factors like the availability of work would therefore be somewhat similar between migrants, I could more easily look at the different countries that a migrant went to, and see how those different countries affected a migrant's situation when they returned home. I also did collect enough data, in my opinion, to make statements about the specific destination countries of migrants, and for example how different countries often give different results with regards to factors like economic gain. However, if I had just focussed on migrants that worked in one country, I think it would have been very difficult to compare effects of labour migration, because I think it would have been very difficult to find a comprehensive case study, as migrants from a single village often migrate to different countries. Therefore, it would have been more difficult to compare the results of a migration period, as the context in which this migration took place (for more on the socio-economic and political context of migration, see chapter three) would differ between places of origin.

Cedhaksolo itself is situated in a slightly hilly area (at least for Dutch standards) of Karanganyar. It is surrounded by a reasonably large area of agricultural land, with a large percentage of rice fields, though foodstuffs like corn were also grown in some places, though I do not for example have accurate records of who, or which family or business, owned them. It lies near Karanganyar city, and had a well-kept road network for the motorcycles, and relatively few cars that I spotted there. The houses were usually one-story and the walls and, presumably, the foundations were often made of concrete, with tiled roofs. I do not know to what extend this applies to the rest of Indonesia, but I was told that concrete houses were seen as more prestigious than those made of brick or for example bamboo, and that given the possibility, people would therefore rather choose concrete to build their house.

However, because Cedhaksolo is quite small, and I had some contacts in other parts of Central Java, I also conducted some interviews outside of the Karanganyar/Solo areas. I for example also spoke to members of NGOs in Yogyakarta and the Wonosobo area. Though these interviews were often of an introductory nature, and I certainly did not do enough to make statistically valid statements about broader areas of Central Java, they did give me brief insights into the circumstances of migrants outside of Cedhaksolo, and at least allow me to make some statements about the similarities and differences I encountered regarding the different shapes of their migration processes.

1.4. Methodology

While I do not think that the methodology I used can be called innovative, or is otherwise different from most anthropological research, I do want to spend a few words to write about the ways in which I gathered data during my stay in the field. I think it is thereby especially important to discuss my own position as an outsider in the field, and how that influenced the data I gathered using these methods.

During my fieldwork I mainly used semi-structured interviews to gather data. I prefer semi-structured ones because they allow a certain degree of freedom to ask further about interesting answers, while still ensuring a certain degree of comparability between interviews because I had a topic list. However, the 'problem' with semi-structured interviews (and let's be honest, with a lot of anthropological methods) is that the answers given in them are subjective, and are partially shaped by the respondents expectations of the interviewer, in this case, me. I was, and still am, an outsider to the community I studied, and that was in my opinion quite noticeable as well. In many of the homes where I did interviews, I was for example asked how things that came up during interviews were done back in The Netherlands, or people commented on how I look foreign, or even took pictures of me. As Berremans for example also argues, my position as an outsider might also cause certain expectations in the community I did research with (Berremans 2012: 157). While I tried to, to a certain degree, circumvent this by for example asking similar questions, but worded slightly different, or combining interviews with methods like photo-elicitation, I can imagine that some of my respondents simply did not want to share some personal information with outsiders, let alone foreigners. As I will elaborate on further in the following chapters, I especially had the feeling that with questions relating to negative experiences abroad or in their home village, respondents might have been a bit reluctant to open up to me, especially if their stories were linked to family members, or people that I also knew. Therefore, I do not think that my outsider position, and the implications for my research data, should be overlooked.

Furthermore, my foreignness might have been emphasised by the fact that my command of the Indonesian language (let alone that of Javanese, which is often the first language of people on Java) was not well enough to conduct interviews, in my opinion. Attempts at which was often met with playful mockery. Therefore, I predominantly made use of an interpreter during interviews where my respondent (did not think they) could speak the English language sufficiently. This did, however, have some implications for my data as well. Borchgrevink for example argues that translation is never a mechanical process, whereby a sentence is 'flawlessly' translated from one language to the other, but also has to take into account that some words may be untranslatable, or have implicit connotations that are difficult to put into words (Borchgrevink 2003: 105-106). During my own

fieldwork, I for example sometimes encountered the word *arisan* when talking to NGOs, which might be literally translated as a lottery, or as a social gathering, but is a specific Indonesian phrase for a kind of rotating savings and credit association, whereby in my case migrant groups pooled money together, and decided by lot who would receive that meeting's money. This translation issue might therefore, though I tried to avoid it by talking about them with my interpreter, also have been present while translating my questions into Indonesian.

As Berremans also argues, similarly as with my position as a researcher, the presence of an interpreter, or a research assistant, might create certain expectations for my respondents, for example related to the (imagined) class, or religion of my interpreter, and they might adjust their answers accordingly (Berremans 2012: 157). Therefore, to put the data on which this thesis is based a bit more into context; I want to briefly talk about the interpreter I worked together with. Amel, my research assistant, was a female student at a university in Yogyakarta, though she came from a city in West Java. She was also a Muslim, wore a hijab and sometimes prayed while we were visiting respondents. Returning to Berreman's article, while I do agree that interpreters can restrict access to information for interviewers because of the social position of the interpreter (Berremans 2012: 157), I'd argue that during my fieldwork, Amel's position as an Indonesian, sharing the same language, and more often than not the same religion with my respondents, she helped create rapport with my respondents that I, as an outsider, might have had more difficulties with.

Though, often during interviews I found that the initial awkwardness of me coming into someone's home as a foreign outsider also sometimes made it (at least seem that it was) more difficult to access a respondent's 'back stage', and sometimes resulted in answer that I was pretty sure were formulated in a certain way because I am an foreigner. For example, one of my respondents, a job agent from Solo, often referred to my specific position as an anthropologist while talking about what were, according to him, the specific personality traits of certain (ethnic) groups in Indonesia. My status as an anthropologist thereby, in my opinion, prompted him to show that he, too, was an 'expert' on the field of Indonesian society. I often found that while during interviews, this awkwardness about my position in the field might have caused some inhibitions for respondents to answer, often while visiting a respondent's house, my interpreter and I would be served tea and snacks. When I closed my notebook, and more or less implied that the 'official' interview was over, we'd often have small talk and the like; over tea. Often during these moments, I found that it was suddenly much easier to gain a glimpse of the back stage of my respondents (or I least I felt it was), with respondents talking much more often about, for example, personal issues. I therefore also included 'tea-and-food-talks' as a quite regular methodology afterwards.

Though participant observation is often one of the principal methods of anthropological research, my focus on migration did not allow me many situations where it could be effectively employed. While I would certainly have liked to be able to join migrants on their migration periods abroad, for example, I was unable to due to time and budgetary constraints. However, I did join migrants in a few cases when they went to trainings and workshops.

At this point I think it might also be good to mention that, though I did choose the village of Cedhaksolo as my specific case study, I did not actually live there, but stayed in the nearby city of Solo. Therefore, I am aware that I might have overlooked some aspects of the field that might have come up in the periods that I was not present, and I had even less possibilities to employ participant observation as a method during my fieldwork. However, I am still confident that the data I gathered is sufficient for the purpose of writing this thesis.

As I implicitly stated in earlier parts of this introduction, the largest portion of my research population consisted of (ex-) labour migrants. However, I also for example spoke to employees of NGOs, policy-makers, and job agents, all of whom, as I will explain in later parts of this thesis, also play an important role in shaping a migrant's migration period. I predominantly found these respondents through snowball sampling. Before I started my research, I had established some NGO and governmental contacts in the field through (mutual) acquaintances of mine, and I mostly found my participants through the social networks of these initial contacts. While this did give me a quite wide range of participants within the 'categories' of NGOs, policy-makers, and of course (ex-)labour migrants, the problem with this method of sampling is that you run the risk of only talking to people from one social network.

For example, as I mentioned in the previous part of this introduction, I chose the village of Cedhaksolo, in the Karanganyar regency as my central case study. The reason for this was partially because I managed to contact the village head's wife through an NGO in Solo, where I lived. Because I knew the village head's wife I could then more easily talk to migrants that lived in the village. However, I noticed that while I was doing research there, I would mostly get to speak to people that were either related to, or acquaintances of her. Therefore, while I also to a lesser extend continued snowball sampling with those respondents too, I think that most of my respondents came to a certain degree from the same social network. Though, on the other hand, the village where I did research was quite small, and people did tend to know each other because of that, or were related to each other.

In order to overcome this 'one social network' issue with snowball sampling, I did try to find for example multiple NGOs and, as I mentioned before, continued to snowball sample with respondents

that I found through an earlier snowball sample. Because respondents that I did not find through snowball sampling often gave quite similar answers to those I found with snowball sampling, I do, however, not think that this form of sampling had extensive (negative) influences on the validity of my research. I'd also argue that the relatively large network of respondents, that snowball sampling gave me access to, constitutes a benefit of this kind of sampling that more or less balances, or outweighs, its drawbacks.

1.5. A Short Note on Ethics

While I, in my opinion, did not conduct a research that was controversial, or could lead to negative consequences for my respondents, it is of course always difficult to estimate exactly how far, and to whom, this thesis will spread. I therefore anonymised the names of respondents, and the research locations that are too small to ensure a certain degree of anonymity, to be completely sure that they will suffer no negative repercussions for participating in my research. I used pseudonyms for this purpose, consisting of the polite forms of address ('mas' or 'mbak' for a younger male or female, and 'pak' and 'ibu/bu' for older men and women') and a first name. While doing fieldwork I also for example considered the AAA Code of Ethics (2012) to ensure proper conduct.

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

Having given a general introduction to my thesis and my fieldwork, the location(s) of my research and the methods that I used, in the following parts I want to focus on my findings. I will therefore, in the next chapter, explain the theoretical framework that I used to conduct my fieldwork and to analyse and conceptualise my research findings. Before I will then zoom in on my main case study, in chapter three I firstly want to elaborate a bit further on the general socio-economic and political context in which both the (ex-) migrants from Cedhaksolo, and those from the broader Central Java province, are embedded. In chapters four to six I want to, more or less step-by-step, follow the general migration process of Cedhaksolo labour migrants. While this division might sometimes seem arbitrary (interactions with job agencies for example stretch out over both the 'before' and 'during' periods), I tried to group important concepts and data as much as possible, to ensure a (hopefully) logical narrative, and a clear construction of my arguments.

I will firstly explain the influence of social (family and community) relations in the creation of motivations to migrate, and the power relations inherent in them, in chapter four. I will thereby also delve a bit deeper into the question what exactly constitutes for example notions of family.

In chapter five I will describe the different ways in which a migration period can take shape while the migrant is abroad. I will thereby explain the different categories of destination countries, and for example the role of job and government agencies in shaping the migrants' working conditions while

abroad. I will furthermore discuss the act of remitting while abroad, and how the act of maintaining social relations, and the power relations that accompany them, relate to it.

In chapter six I will discuss the period after migration, and the spending of remittances. I will thereby return to the initial motivations and agreements to migrate abroad, and discuss how these are related to the actual spending of the remittances. I will thereby also explain how the migration period abroad, and the shifting power relations during the migration process, influence the decision - making process regarding this spending.

In the last chapter I will conclude this thesis with an overview and brief discussion of the argument set forth in my thesis, and I will end with a short recommendation to future researchers and policy - makers.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I want to discuss the theoretical framework that I used during my fieldwork in Central Java, and have used as a foundation for this thesis. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the focus of my research lies on the role that social relations play in the shaping of migration processes, and the influence they have on the control over, and availability of, remittances that result from this migration. I thereby identified three main concepts along which I built the argument of this thesis, and which I will describe in this chapter. I will hereby firstly focus on the concept of social networks, as a way to identify the actors involved in a migration process, with a specific focus on family or household, and community relations. Building on this discussion I secondly want to discuss the concept of remittance obligations, as coined by Stuart Philpott (1968), as a way to combine and analyse the social and economic sides of labour migration, and expand on the power relations inherent in migrants' social relations. Lastly, I want to focus on the concept of bargaining power of migrants, in order to shift the focus of this framework to the period after a migrant returns from their migration period abroad.

2.1. Social Networks and Motivations to Migrate

Since the early 1990's, academic (anthropological) literature on transnationalism and transnational practices has rapidly expanded and, as with many other anthropological topics, has been highlighted from many different angles, from transnational religious practices (Werbner 2002), to marriages (Olwig, 2002, Shaw & Charsley 2006), development practices (Bornstein 2003), and many more (see, for example Sanjek 2012). During my own research I primarily focussed on theories of transnational social relations, emphasising on two types of relations that I found were influential with regards to shaping a migrant's migration period: family relations and community relations. In the further discussion of a migrant's social relations, I will therefore mostly refer to these two types. For the purpose of this theoretical framework I also chose to use the term 'social networks' over 'social relations' to describe this part of my theoretical basis, as a migrant does not only maintain relations with one specific group of people, but is part of a larger set of mutually interlocking social relations (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). I also prefer to categorise my theoretical framework under 'transnationalism' instead of closely related topics like 'diaspora', as I did research with temporary labour migrants, while diaspora is more often used for a more permanent type of migration process, often sustained over the course of multiple generations (Butler 2001: 192).

Starting with a description of the debates surrounding the topic of family relations, I think it might be useful to firstly determine how family can be defined. Sanjek, for example, argues that there is no real definition to be given for the concept of family, as family (and, to certain extent, household)

relations are based upon more or less subjective, individual values, and an all-encompassing etic definition cannot easily be found (Sanjek 2012: 357). However, this does not mean that there have been no attempts at conceptualising and defining transnational family relations. Basch, Szanton-Blanc & Glick Schiller (1994), in their book that popularised the term 'transmigrant', take a very household-centric view of family in my opinion, whereby a focus lies on, among others, the different households in which a migrant was raised. While 'household' and 'family' are quite closely-related subjects I would thereby argue that the focus on a specific physical place and locality (like a house) as the basis of analysis makes the concept of 'household' less relevant in a migration context, especially when the family is spread over multiple locations. While household theories related to, for example, economic contributions of family to a household (Sanjek 2012: 359) are relevant to my research, I prefer to analyse my data through the somewhat broader concept of 'family'.

Baldassar, Baldock & Wilding (2006), in their ethnography on transnational care, focus on grandparents, their children and grandchildren to explain the practice of caring for elderly relatives, thereby differentiating family member by for example distance to these elderly relatives. Meanwhile, Creed argues that because of the multitude of interpretations of the concept of family, anthropologists should not focus on defining family, but should instead focus on the concept of family value, and its influence on for example economic relations (Creed 2000: 330). In chapter four I will go into much greater detail about how the concept of family is perceived in the community I studied, and I will hereby personally tend to use the concept of family as describing the nuclear family (plus grandparents), thereby to a certain degree following Baldassar et al.'s focus on blood-relatives and distance. However, I do concur with Creed that the specific definition of the concept of family is not necessarily important to define family, but it is important to look at the value of 'family', and its impact on economic processes. For example, I will argue that family values, like the obligation to care for one's family, create motivations to migrate abroad.

Besides family relations, the community from which a migrant originates can also influence the shape that a migration period takes, or promote the intention to migrate. Kandel & Massey for example argue that in communities with a high percentage of migrants, migration turned into an implicit social expectation, whereby young men viewed migration as a rite of passage (Kandel & Massey 2002: 982). On the other hand, Levitt & Lamba-Nieves argue that migrants also influence their communities, by sending ideas and 'culture' back from the countries in which they work (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011: 3). However, they hereby argue that, instead of labour migration becoming the 'norm' within the community, as Kandel & Massey argue, children from the sending community might instead become less productive and willing to work, as the family and community members abroad already provide for them (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011: 19). In this thesis (especially in

chapter five) I will, however, mostly side with Kandel & Massey in this debate, not necessarily with their argument of migration becoming normative, but I do concur that in the community that I studied, community migration promotes migration as an alternative way to find employment.

Community relations or community influence on migration processes might also express themselves through other types of norms. Guarnizo & Smith for example argue that though migration is a universal process, no claim to 'one-size-fits-all' theories can be made, as the contexts in which this migration takes place differs from case to case, and migrant to migrant (Guarnizo & Smith 1998: 24). Social or 'cultural' norms, like gender roles, I found, thereby serve as some of the major influences and structures that can shape a migration trajectory. Preibisch & Grez for example argue that gender expectations impact the flow of migrants between countries (Preibisch & Grez 2010: 298). A sending country might hereby be more hesitant to for example send women abroad, no matter the motivations of the families. Brumer, on the other hand, thereby argues that in the community she studied, gender roles within Brazilian families precisely led to a prevalence of female migrant workers moving away from the community (Brumer 2008: 25). With my research, as I will explain in the next chapter, I want to show that while I did not necessarily find gender roles within Cedhaksolo village that had a large impact on migration intentions, gender roles outside of Indonesia can also impact the ability of Indonesian migrants to move abroad, through for example gendered demands for labourers, which in turn created a larger supply of female migrants to countries like Hong Kong, where specific gender biases created a larger demand for female migrants.

2.2. Remittance Obligations

Having focussed on social and community relations, I want to now shift the focus towards remittances, and the social and power relations that they are a part of. To illustrate this, I borrowed the term 'remittance obligations' from Stuart Philpott (1968). Though his article is quite old, I do still agree with his argument that remittances are to a certain extent an embodiment of the social relations that a migrant has with their family and community. Through the remitting of money and goods, these social relations are maintained, but when either the remittances or the relations decline, the others do so too (Philpott 1968: 473-474). However, Philpott is not the only author to argue that social relations and economic forces are linked, with Creed (2000) arguing that culturally specific family values can for example impact the ways in which businesses are organised. However, in the next chapters I will mostly adopt Philpott's theory, as it is in my opinion more suited to temporary labour migration, where a migrant has little to say about the organisation of the companies where they work.

Using the term 'obligation', I also want to draw attention to the aspect of power relations and reciprocity within labour migration. Sahlins for example argues that, according to the typology he presents in his book, family relations can be viewed as generalized reciprocal relations, whereby there is not direct exchange of goods (remittances, for example, are not immediately exchanged for physical commodities). Instead, counter-obligations are less specific and not subject to a time limit, like the continuation of social contacts (Sahlins 1972: 193-194). However, while Philpott for example describes that family member borrow money from each other to pay for passage fees in order to migrate (Philpott 1968: 474), which would mean that remitting could be seen as a form of balanced reciprocity (Sahlins 1972: 194-195) I found that this practice, and the power relations that it entails is not that common anymore in an Indonesian labour migration context, as I will explain further in the next chapters. In his framework, Sahlins also identifies negative reciprocity, whereby goods of unequal values are exchanged, and one of the parties in the exchange wants to maximise their profits (Sahlins 1972: 195-196). While I do concur that in a migration setting, remittances can be seen as having relatively little value in relation to the social relations that a migrant 'receives', I did not encounter this framing of migration as an unequal exchange during interviews, and it is my opinion that a generalized reciprocity context will come closer to the description of the remittance process that I was given by the ex-migrants I spoke to.

Having established that remittances are to a certain degree the embodiment of social relations, I would argue that it is also important not to overlook their economic (and political) context. Though migrants for example have a certain degree of choice to accept the consequences and break transnational social relations (created through remittances) (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1017; Philpott 1968: 473-474), sometimes the reasons for a decrease in remittances lies beyond their control. The amount of money a migrant can remit is to a certain degree determined by the broader social structures in which they find themselves. As mentioned earlier, gender roles might for example determine in which sectors a migrant can and cannot find employment (Preibisch & Grez 2010: 298) or international agreements might determine which job sectors are available at which location (Collins 2002: 164). During my own fieldwork I for example found that gender roles and gender biases of both job agencies and employers resulted in a higher number of jobs in sectors like domestic work were available for women, because of their (imagined) gender characteristics. Furthermore, as I will also show in the next chapter, international agreements between Indonesia and countries like South Korea and Japan created job opportunities and guarantees that, while difficult to achieve and receive, did not exist before those agreements were made.

While discussing labour migration, the legal status of migrants might also impact a migrant's remittance amounts, as legal migrants might find it easier to remit (higher amounts of) money than

illegal migrants. As Fassin for example argues, the creation of borders also impacts the amount of freedom certain groups of people have once they are inside a country (Fassin 2011: 214). Furthermore, as I will explain in chapter five, I also found that structures like political policy-making, and working conditions impact the ability of migrants to remit, and the possible height of their remittances.

2.3. Bargaining Position

In the previous parts of this framework I focussed primarily on social relations, and on the transfer of economic resources that influence the process of moving and working abroad. With the concept of bargaining position, however, I want to focus on the period after migration, and analyse the ways in which the possible results of the migration period (like the remittances that are sent back) are influenced by the (changing) power relations that are inherent in the earlier-discussed power relations, throughout the migration process, and the decision making-process that ensues.

With regards to power relations, social relations are not static, and through the act of remitting, a migrant's 'rank' or place within the family might change. Levitt & Glick Schiller for example argue that after the migration period is over, the migrant might have increased their social (and economic) power through the act of working abroad (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1012-1014).

As Gardiner Barber for example also addresses in her article, the act of migrating might provide opportunities for migrants to empower themselves in relation to their families and communities, that they would 'normally' not get because of their gender roles (Gardiner Barber 2002: 56). And in her article, Gamburd notes that family relations are not static, but are constantly changing according to the social and economic circumstances that the family finds itself in (Gamburd 2008: 8). The empowerment of migrants might therefore also cause the 'leading' role of the family to shift towards the migrant, as they have the ability to bring social and economic power to the family. Levitt and Glick Schiller therefore, for example, also note that women increasingly start to head (transnational) families that were 'traditionally' headed by men (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1016). By (possibly) bringing more social and economic power to their communities and families, returning migrants might therefore create obligations for their families and communities, whereby they receive more standing or prestige within these social structures.

Sahlins, too, hereby argues that the act of remitting in a family context creates (albeit non-obligatory) counter-obligations for the receiver of the economic resources (Sahlins 1972: 194). While the difference between the articles might seem small, in this thesis I will focus more on Sahlins' analysis of generalized reciprocity in a family-context, over the other ones, because (as I explain in chapter six) I did not find explicit changes in social power because of the act of labour migration, or

at least not to the extent that Levitt & Glick Schiller's article implies. I therefore argue that a generalized reciprocity view on bargaining power might be more fitting than for example a focus explicit changes in the heading of families, like Levitt & Glick Schiller argue. However, I will also show in chapter six that in certain cases, the concept of bargaining power is not relevant at all to migration periods, as some migrants might not have remittances left after they return from migration, and therefore also have nothing to bargain over.

2.4. Relation between the Concepts

As I have tried to show earlier, the concepts I have listed above build upon each other in multiple ways. Firstly, using different concepts I want to highlight different stages in migration (before, during, after), and the social, economic, and possible political relations that play a part in them.

Secondly, these concepts build upon each other theoretically. While labour migration is a social activity, as it is practiced within a social network of a range of actors, like family and community members, it cannot be seen separately from the more economic aspects, like remittances. However, remittances, in turn are not purely economic, but have a social side as well. Philpott illustrates this using term 'remittance obligations', in which remittances embody the social relations between migrants and their communities (Philpott 1968: 473-474). But as Gamburd argues, these remittances might also be an economic necessity, to for example provide a family with their basic needs (Gamburd 2008: 10). The concept of a migrant's bargaining position combines these economic and social relations, and adds a power-perspective, to for example show how social and economic obligations are constructed, and shift between different stages of migration. In answering the question which factors influence the remittances of return migrants after their migration period, I therefore argue that a combination of the three above concepts are useful to highlight the dynamic relation between the different social and economic factors that constitute the concept of labour migration.

In the following chapters I will link the theoretical framework that I build in this chapter to the empirical data that I gathered during my fieldwork. I will thereby also show, as I already sometimes briefly mentioned, how I position myself in the academic debates that I described here, and which authors and approaches were useful in the specific context of my fieldwork.

Chapter 3: The Socio-Economic and Political Context of Migration

Before I elaborate further on my main case study, I think it might be useful to first expand a bit on the socio-economic and political context in which Indonesian labour migration takes place. While the village in which I did research is quite small, and it might be easy to view it as an isolated phenomenon, it is still subjected to structures like, for example, national and provincial laws and policies, or the general economic situation in the regency of Karanganyar, or Central Java, or the demand for workers in countries like Malaysia and South Korea. Furthermore, as the structures that I will discuss in this chapter have a significant influence on for example the ability to earn remittances abroad, and the ways in which migrants' migration trajectories take shape, I think it is important to firstly consider the broader socio-economic and political context in which these migration processes I studied took place, and to which the migrants I studied were, or are, subjected.

3.1. The Host Countries

I hereby firstly want to briefly expand further on the specific countries in which the migrants I studied worked. Most of the migrants in my specific case worked at some point or the other in Malaysia, with half of my respondents having done at least one period of work there. This popularity of Malaysia as a destination country is also reflected in the statistics of the BNP2TKI, the national organisation for the placement and protection of migrant workers, which show that with about 35 percent of migrant workers moving there, Malaysia is the most popular destination for Indonesian migrant workers (BNP2TKI 2016: 4). While the official statistics of the BNP2TKI might not reflect for example illegal migrant workers and such, and many of the migrants I have spoken to did multiple periods of migration in different countries, I think the claim that Malaysia is the most popular destination for migration, or at least that it was, is quite substantiated. To a certain degree, this was also to be expected. When asked about the reasons to migrate to Malaysia, most of my respondents cited that they perceive Malaysia as having a quite similar culture, and similar language as Indonesia and that, coupled with the relative proximity to their homes, this would make living in that country easier. Borrowing Yuval Davis' (2006) term, the prospect of 'belonging' might therefore appear greater in Malaysia than in other countries outside of Indonesia. Of course the (in the past) higher wages in Malaysia were also an often cited motivation.

However, the income difference between Malaysia and Indonesia has decreased in recent years, or at least it is perceived as such by a large amount of my respondents. Therefore, I found that migrants more often prefer to work in countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, or Singapore, where wages are higher. While the data from the BNP2TKI still shows Malaysia as the most popular destination (BNP2TKI 2016: 4), from my own research, I found that the above mentioned countries

are becoming more and more popular. As one of my respondents stated, working in Malaysia used to be worthwhile because of the higher wages there, but he wouldn't do it again at this point because the wages are currently similar to Indonesia. As Levitt & Glick Schiller also argue, migration can be viewed as a dynamic intersection between a migrant's personal losses and gains (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1013-1014). In this case, the perceived similarities between Indonesia and Malaysia, or the expected feeling of 'belonging' there, no longer weigh up against a wage that is increasingly more similar to that of Indonesia, and isn't worth leaving the country for.

Though Malaysia is, at least in the context of my research, becoming a less popular destination for migration, this does not mean that that is a reason for less people to move abroad (though BNP2TKI statistics show differently (BNP2TKI 2016b: 3)), they just want to move to different countries. While countries in Europe or North America are seen as the most desirable countries to work, this is often not possible for Indonesian (unskilled) migrants, because of immigration restrictions. However, as I will explain further in the next part, agreements made between Indonesia and South Korea and Japan mean that work in these countries (while still relatively hard to achieve), and the high(er) wages it promises, is made more accessible to prospective Indonesian labour migrants, and therefore also becoming more popular. However, I would argue that, in practice, countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are in the highest demand for migrant communities I spoke to, as even though the Indonesian government has not made any formal migration agreements with them, they are still relatively easy to obtain work in through job agencies, and the wages there are higher than Malaysia.

With regards to work abroad, though jobs in both the manufacturing sector and as domestic worker are large areas of employment in Malaysia, the availability of work in certain sectors differs in other countries. For example, most of the migrants I spoke to that worked in Hong Kong, worked there as domestic workers. In Taiwan on the other hand, migrants work in both manufacturing and domestic work sectors. Meanwhile, South Korea and Japan have a greater demand for workers in their manufacturing industries. It is hereby worth noting that these jobs are often quite gender specific, whereby domestic worker jobs are usually only available to women, because they for example might appear more caring than men, or they can get jobs at the assembly lines for small electronics, because they are perceived to have more nimble fingers. Men, or the other hand, are more often recruited for the 'heavier' jobs, like heavy industry, because they are perceived as being stronger than women. Availability of work in the above mentioned countries might therefore also differ depending on a migrant's sex. These gendered expectations for migrant labourers were to a certain degree to be expected; Preibisch and Grez for example also describe gendered expectations about migrants on the side of employers (Preibisch & Grez 2010: 301).

Lastly, as I had almost no respondents that worked in Saudi Arabia in recent years, let alone respondents that worked there in the domestic sector, I would like to add that the high ranking of Saudi Arabia as a popular destination country in the aforementioned BNP2TKI (2016b) statistics came as a bit of a surprise to me. While some of my respondents say they worked there a long time ago, I heard more stories about how people would not want to work there because of the very vulnerable position of migrants in the country, especially in the domestic sector. So much so that even the Indonesian government instated a ban on (informal) domestic worker migration to that country in 2011.

3.2. Local and International Policy-Making

The different economic and political factors that explain the (decrease in) popularity of most of the countries that I mentioned in the previous part can also partially be explained through the international agreements that Indonesia made with other (Asian) states. While Indonesia has quite a lot of international agreements about the possibilities for Indonesians to work abroad, like the implementation of the ASEAN common market in 2016, that makes it easier for skilled labourers to work abroad, the main agreements that influenced my research population were the so-called government-to-government (or G2G) agreements with South Korea and Japan. In short, these agreements make it easier for Indonesian (skilled or unskilled) migrant workers to work in South Korea and Japan, if they fulfil certain requirements.

While I had little to no respondents that worked in Japan, and I don't feel knowledgeable enough to write about the specific agreements for that country, I did meet quite a lot of people that were hoping to work in South Korea, and were taking a language course in order to do so. Being able to speak the language is namely one of the requirements for Indonesian migrants to work in South Korea, and most migrants take a six-month language course to learn it. After completion, they can take a language test. If they pass that test, and are declared physically fit, they are almost certainly guaranteed a job in South Korea. While the language test, and other preparatory measures like visa applications, are expensive, sometimes ranging in the millions of rupiahs (about a thousand euro's or more), the benefits of working in a country with a higher wage is often seen as outweighing these drawbacks, even if migrants have to sell their valuables in order to do so.

I will elaborate on the exact different between G2G and non-G2G countries in chapter six, but I think it is safe to say at this point that, in general, these G2G countries are becoming more popular as a migration destination because of the perceived opportunities for migrants to earn high(er) wages there. The decline in wages, as I mentioned earlier, is also one of the reasons why Malaysia for example, as far as I have found, has become a less popular destination. Though, on the other hand,

non-G2G countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are still relatively popular because they also have a higher level of wages than Indonesia, and are 'easier' to migrate to, because migrants might not always for example have to take a standardised language test (including long, expensive language course) to work there (legally).

Furthermore, as mentioned briefly in the previous part, the availability of work in other countries is dependent on for example the demands of (gendered) labour in a given country, but also to a large extend on the policies of Indonesia itself[1]. While Saudi Arabia might be seen as a desirable country to migrate to, it might be impossible to do so (legally) because of the ban on domestic work migration to that country. I therefore want to elaborate a bit on the national, or provincial, policy-making in Indonesia with regards to migrants, and how this influences the availability, or the possibility, of work abroad.

With regards to national policy-making, in recent years there have been some widely reported cases of abuse and exploitation of Indonesian migrant workers abroad. Therefore, the government has been implementing laws that allegedly would help reduce the vulnerable position of migrants abroad. For example, in 2007 a law was implemented that made it mandatory for unskilled migrants (the label 'unskilled' being at the discretion of the government) to follow a six-day training before moving abroad. In this training, the migrants are for example told about the rights they have abroad, or they are pointed out which specific clauses can be found in their contracts. I will elaborate further on these clauses, and the labour conditions that accompany them in chapter five.

Besides national policy, however, the individual provinces and regions of Indonesia also have the authority to, to a certain degree, make policy regarding 'their' migrants. For example, I spoke to policy-makers in Yogyakarta, whereby I was told that the sultan of Yogyakarta, who is also the governor of the province, banned Yogyakartan migrants from working in the informal sector abroad. It might hereby also be good to note that though the informal sector might sometimes be seen as illegal work; in most of Indonesia migrants who state that they go work and in the informal sector usually also receive a training by the BP3TKI (*Badan Pelayanan Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*, the field offices of the BNP2TKI). As Abraham & Van Schendel put it, not all (possibly) illegal acts are seen as illegal or immoral by policy-makers or other actors involved (Abraham & Van Schendel 2005: 18). Even the complete effectiveness of this specific policy might, in

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[1] Under president Joko 'Jokowi' Dodo (president since 2014), the government is pursuing a policy of discouragement in terms of migration abroad. From a political perspective, migration is seen as for example signifying dissatisfaction about job opportunities in Indonesia, and results in Indonesia being known as an 'emigration country' in terms of labour force. Since the implementation of several policies on labour migration, the official BNP2TKI statistics (BNP2TKI 2016b) also show that the total amount of labour migrants is decreasing.

my opinion, be questioned, as informal sector migrants from outside of Yogyakarta are still eligible for a training in that province. To a certain degree, the BP3TKI, as the local field office, thereby also has limited freedom to formulate its own policy based on the needs in their province, the office in Yogyakarta was for example very proud of their policy innovations and migrant trainings, but they still have to follow most of the guidelines the national BNP2TKI has set out.

Of course, continuing Abraham & Van Schenkel's argument of the difference between an act being illegal, and it being viewed as illegal (Abraham & Van Schenkel 2005: 18), that I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this also means that Indonesian law itself is not always an absolute force that cannot be circumvented. For example, I spoke to migrants who, though they were minors at the time and therefore not allowed to work as a migrant labourer, were able to find work in Malaysia because they were supplied with false identity papers. While policy might have been put into place to protect Indonesian migrants, this does not always mean that they themselves, or for example their family members in the case of minors, see it as a useful, or even a legitimate policy.

While making definitive claims about the effectiveness of Indonesian policy-making lies a bit outside of the scope of my research, for my intents and purposes, I think it does show that while migrants still have the agency to find work abroad, this policy-making adds another structure that influences the migrant's ability to move to a certain country, to remit money, or as I will explain further in chapter five, even to maintain social relations while abroad.

3.3. Gendered and Ethnic Biases

In the previous paragraphs I mentioned that often, while trying to find work abroad, employers have certain biases in relation to gender. Women might be hired for the more 'caring' jobs, while men might be more often hired for the 'heavier' jobs. However, ethnic biases, based on the place of origin of a migrant (within Indonesia) might also play a role in determining if, and where, a migrant might find work abroad.

During my research I did a couple of interviews with employees from job agencies in Yogyakarta and Solo, whereby the requirements for migrants in order to find work were also discussed. While I will explain the role of job (and government) agencies in for example remittance earning and remittances practices in chapter five, it is in my opinion important to note at point how agency practices might influence a migrant's opportunity to find work in the first place.

Indonesia is a large country, and as with many countries around the world, people from one part of the country might have their stereotypes about people from the other parts. During these interviews I noticed that these biases are also present with these job agents. For example, when asked about

why these agents operated in Yogyakarta or Solo, I often heard the answer that Javans, or especially Central Javanese people, were hard workers, and therefore more suited to send abroad. Of course this sounds positive, a compliment to the Javanese, but it is still a bias, and it implies that people from the rest of Indonesia are less suited to be (migrant) workers. Furthermore, it implies that people from places that the job agents deem 'less suited' to migrate might find it harder to find work abroad, even if they have the same qualifications as other prospective migrants.

Biases about migrant workers (from an employer's perspective) and their implications for the access to work are, of course, not a solely Indonesian or Southeast Asian phenomenon, but fits in the larges academic (anthropological) narrative on gendered and ethnic biases. Similar situations have for example been described in different parts of the world, by authors like Karjanen (2008: 60) and Preibisch & Grez (2010: 298).

One of the more 'extreme' opinions in this matter that I heard was during an interview with a job agent in Solo, who hired migrants for companies in Malaysia. He told me that he would only ever hire migrants from Central Java to work abroad, because you can at least train them to work hard. People from West Java were too lazy to do so, he continued, and people from East Java were too hot-headed, and could just as well slip a knife between your ribs if they disagree with you. Not to mention female migrants in general, who would quit work as soon as they found a nice boyfriend abroad.

While the above anecdote is certainly not representative for all of my respondents in job agencies, in my opinion it does illustrate that while migrants might want to move abroad to work, this is not always within their own control. Biases, gendered or ethnic, also very much influence the chances a migrant has to find work abroad.

As a concluding remark for this section, I think it might be nice to add that during these interviews, Amel, my Indonesian, female counterpart, who studied in Yogyakarta, but is originally from Cirebon, in West Java, was also present, and interpreting during most of these interviews. While as a foreign anthropologist, I probably got treated differently than the prospective Indonesian migrants who go to these agencies, in my experience the agents I spoke to were not hesitant to talk about other Indonesians, in the presence of other Indonesians.

3.4. Concluding Remarks

Having discussed the general context in which Indonesian labour migration, and in its extension the migration periods of the migrants I studied, took place, I would like to take a brief moment to add some concluding remarks. As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, I intended to use this

chapter as a quick overview of the broader socio-economic and political context which in all probability influence most Indonesian labour migrants: the national laws and international agreements, the expectations of destination countries and the biases that a migrant might be subjected to, in my opinion all play a role in shaping the whole trajectory of migration that a migrant goes through. From being accepted, and migrating abroad, to the sectors that are available in a different country, to, as I intend to show in the following chapters, the aftereffects of migration, this whole trajectory is influenced by the above described context.

While I do not dare to claim that the context I described above is complete, and valid for all of the hundreds of thousands Indonesian labour migrants, nor that this was the objective of my research, it was most definitely of importance for the migration periods of the migrants I did research with. As this chapter has been of a mostly introductory nature, I will not yet make any definitive conclusions regarding for example the focus of my research, but I do want to emphasise at this point that, while it may sometimes appear that migration is a purely individualistic way to economic growth, while it may appear that migrants have the full agency to choose (where) to work abroad, structures like those I mentioned above play a very large role in determining the ways in which a migration process can take shape. Migration, as with most things anthropologists study, should not be viewed as either being an act of agency, or as being shaped by a structure, but as a dynamic field in the grey area where both intersect.

Chapter 4: Intentions to Migrate

I decided to move abroad after my mother passed away. (…)The fishermen I worked with used to stop in Malaysia. I met a friend there who told me about working in Malaysia. (…) I am the oldest child. I went fishing to care for my brothers and sisters.

-Mas Eko, ex-migrant (originally from Sumatra)

As I mentioned before, in my opinion labour migration cannot be viewed solely as an act of agency, whereby all of the decision-making power lies with the migrants themselves, and instead it is important to consider the dynamics between this agency, and the broader structures in which migration takes place that might influence the decision-making process. In the previous chapter, I have elaborated on the more general socio-economic and political context in which migration in (Central) Java takes place. In this chapter, and in the following ones, I want to focus more closely on the village of Cedhaksolo, and on the specific context in which the migration processes of its migrants take shape. Specifically, in this chapter I want to focus on the initial stages of migration, and for example the motivations of migrants to migrate, the actors involved in the decision-making process, and the people involved in preparing the migration period.

4.1. Motivations to Migrate

As I mentioned earlier, I think the best way to discuss the changing social and economic situations of the migrants I studied, is to follow their migration process in this thesis. Therefore, I will begin this chapter at the beginning of the migration process: the reasons for migrants to migrate in the first place. While talking about the motivations to migrate, a lack of economic resources is often cited in (academic) literature as the main one. Gamburd, for example, describes that working abroad is often a necessary course of action because economic hardship at home, in the community of origin, might leave a family with little access to basic life necessities (Gamburd 2008: 10). Migration by one or more family members can often, in that case, make sure that other members of the family have an adequate access to for example food (Gamburd 2008: 10) or education (see for example Coe 2011: 154; Gamburd 2008: 10). Education is hereby often seen as an almost necessary measure for the children of the family to have access to (greater) economic opportunities in their future (Preibisch & Grez 2010: 300).

In the case of Cedhaksolo, I found that there, too, a lack of economic resources was the main reason for members of the community to migrate abroad. As I mentioned in the introduction, I was told that unemployment was reasonably high in both the period that I stayed in the village, and in the years prior to my research. Especially people with only the minimum mandatory level of education were often perceived as having low possibilities at finding employment in Karanganyar. Therefore, most of

the ex-migrants I spoke to looked abroad to find jobs, in order to have a decent income to provide for their families, or members of their family.

Furthermore, villagers that had migrated abroad were often seen having not only been able to provide the basic necessities for their respective families, but also often were seen as having garnered enough economic resources to improve their (economic) standing within the community, by for example building or renovating their house, expanding or setting up a business, buying land, or otherwise engaged in economic activities (like buying a(n extra) motorcycle) that seemed to suggest that their migration periods abroad significantly increased their economic circumstances.

This perception of migrants as having better chances at economic growth came forward in interviews I conducted with some of the ex-migrants in the village. When asked the question "Why did you migrate in the first place?", in almost every case, the answer was a variation of wanting to care for family members (for example children, spouse, or parents). Therefore, like Gamburd for example also describes, these respondents often had the intention of moving abroad to earn enough wages to supply the basic life necessities of their family members, like building a house, or an education for their children (Gamburd 2008: 10).

However, in many cases, the then still prospective migrants would also make plans to use the possible remittances to plan for future economic enterprises (in Cedhaksolo), by for example wanting to buy land, or to start a business or invest in a spouse's business if they earn enough wages abroad. A (often two-year) stay abroad could thereby possibly provide the means for economic security back home, and prevent the need for additional periods of migration for them, or their family members.

The different ways in which this picture of 'migration to prevent further migration' narrative is constructed is, in my opinion, a sufficiently complex subject to warrant its own thesis, but I'd argue that some of the 'main groups' of my research population (migrants, job agencies, government agencies) all contributed to a certain degree. For example, the visible economic success of some ex-migrants within the community (who for example started their own businesses, or bought visible displays of economic status, like vehicles, or house-expansions) is one part that I mentioned earlier. However, I would argue that job agencies and their recruiters by, as I noticed during interviews, promoting the success stories of migrants further reinforce this image of economic growth and migration. Governmental agencies like the BNP2TKI and their field offices in my opinion contribute by emphasising economic success stories of migrants (and thereby highlight their own roles in it), while the negative stories of migrants that did not 'succeed' are often downplayed as sporadic cases of 'bad character traits' of individual migrants. Of course, this is a very broad, somewhat generalised overview, but it at least gives an impression of the possible ways in which the 'economic gain'

motivation for migration can be constructed and perpetuated, and thereby influences people to migrate abroad.

On the other hand, returning to the visibility of economic improvement of some ex-migrant community members, some ex-migrants (though not from my 'core' group of Cedhaksolo respondents) told they migrated abroad to earn money to reach the same standard of living of these 'successful' migrants, and not necessarily in a 'long-term economic improvement' way. Instead, they wanted to move abroad to earn enough money to for example expand their house, or buy a new car or motorcycle. They thereby did not have other tangible plans to secure for example a larger income when after they return home and bought these visible symbols of wealth.

I'd therefore argue that, in terms of motivations to migrate, three general, non-exclusive, categories can be given based on the data I have gathered: 'basic necessities', 'long-term economic benefit', and 'commodity purchasing'. Now, I describe this categorisation as non-exclusive, as migrants can have multiple motivations to migrate. For example, a migrant might want to provide the basic necessities for their family members, but in case there is money left after those have been secured, they might plan on buying a plot of land to farm on, or start a small business. Similarly, a migrant who moves abroad in order to earn enough money to start a business might also intend on spending part of that money on a new car. I still prefer to use this (general) categorisation, however, as it allows me to make statements about a relatively diverse array of different motivations. I will especially come back to this categorisation in chapter six, when I discuss how, though these motivations are present before a migrant moves abroad, and though agreements are made with family members about the spending of remittances, there often is a difference between the intentions to spend remittances, and the actual spending of those remittances.

4.2. What is family?

In the previous part I described the different (types of) motivations to migrate, and I thereby also emphasised the role of family in the creation of those motivations. Therefore, at this point it might be good to explore the concept of 'family' a bit further. As Sanjek for example argues, there is no all-encompassing etic definition for the concept of family. Instead, family is a very subjective term, and who belongs to the family, or who is considered part of the household, is based on more or less subjective, individual values (Sanjek 2012: 357). Again, to give a complete overview of how family relations are observed and defined in my research setting would be a bit outside of the scope of my research, but I do want to focus on the specific family relations that play a role in the process of labour migration.

While questions like "Were you married at the time of your migration?" were in my opinion a bit too direct to ask out of the blue, I tried to determine the relevant social relations of my respondents by asking questions like "Did you have children when you moved abroad?", "Who cared for them when you were there?", "(How) did you maintain contact with your family while abroad?" and so on to see who exactly was involved in the migration process. Returning to the subject of migration motivations, I found that in most cases, the nuclear family (spouse and potential children) played the main role in creating motivations to migrate. Though parents, too, often played a role in this part of the migration process if the migrant has children, because I was often told that the grandparents of the children would often (help) care for the children while one of the parents was abroad, thereby facilitating the migration of (one of) the parent(s) by taking responsibility over the raising of the children in their absence.

Of course, some of my respondents also migrated when they were not yet married, and were for example still living with their parents. In those cases I found that in describing their motivations to migrate, these respondents often cited caring for their parents or (younger) siblings as one of the main motivations to migrate. As, like I will also explain further in the next chapter, these family members (spouse, children, parents, and possibly siblings) are also the family members that are most often maintained contact with while abroad, I would argue that for the purpose of this thesis, I can demarcate the concept of family to these 'groups' of social relations.

In the previous part I identified three types of motivations to migrate abroad: basic necessities, long-term economic benefit, and commodity purchasing. I would argue that this desire to care for family members can be expressed through these different kinds of motivations. The motivation to secure basic life necessities maybe has a more obvious link with caring for family members, but I would also argue that, for example, the motivation to secure long-term economic benefits can be seen as a desire to care for family members. In every interview I conducted with ex-migrants, I included the question "Would you ever allow your children to migrate abroad?". While most parents, I found, would allow their children to work abroad if they really wanted to, almost all of them also added that they preferred them to stay in Indonesia. While the working conditions, legal status, and type of work (more on this in the next chapter) were some of the most often quoted factors that might persuade parents to agree with migrating abroad, the overall theme of the answers were that parents preferred their children not to move abroad, because of the risks, insecurity, and the sheer distance involved.

While Levitt & Glick Schiller for example argue that migration abroad might become the 'norm' within families (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1017), I would argue that it is more seen as a 'necessary

evil'. I argued in the previous part how migration by one family member can often be seen as a way to prevent the need for other family members to migrate in the future. Linking this to for example parent-children relations, this means that if (one of) the parents succeed(s) in earning enough wages abroad to invest in land, or a business, back home, they might create a sufficient economic security for their family to eliminate the necessity for their children to migrate abroad as well in the future. As I will elaborate on in the following chapter, given, among other factors, the risks associated with migrating to a foreign country, and the insecure position that migrants can find themselves in, preventing the need for migration is also a way for a parent to protect their children.

In relation to exactly which member(s) of the family moves abroad, my initial literature study suggested that gender roles often lie at the basis of the decision which parent or family member(s) to send abroad (see for example Brumer 2008: 25; Preibisch & Grez 2010: 298). While, as I also described in chapter three, I did find that gender relations often quite explicitly determine a migrant's availability (and types) of work, I did not find a clear-cut correlation between gender relations and the choice for a specific family member to migrate abroad. My research population, both in Cedhaksolo and in other parts of Central Java, consists of both male and female (ex-)migrants and, while a slightly larger portion of my Cedhaksolo research population consisted of men, in other locations I spoke to more women. I did find that a portion of my female research population migrated when they did not yet have children, or were not yet married, but because my research population is quite small, and I also spoke to women who migrated when they for example already did have children, I do not think that this is enough evidence to make definitive claims about gender patterns. I would furthermore argue that instead, a pattern of migrating quite early after graduating from high school, as I for example also describe in the introduction of this thesis, and therefore the relatively young age of my respondents at that point might prove an equally valid explanation.

4.3. Community and Motivations to Migrate

Having focussed on the 'caring for family members' aspect of migration motivations in the previous part, I will now elaborate a bit further on the role that community relations play in creating motivations to migrate. In the beginning of this chapter, I argued that 'successful migrants might sometimes make their increased economic resources visible by for example expanding their house, buying a car, or through starting or expanding a (successful) business. While I would not necessarily describe it as 'jealousy', I found that the ex-migrants I spoke to often cited that wanting to achieve the same level of prosperity was one of the reasons why they migrated abroad. I would argue that successful ex-migrants get a certain degree of socio-economic prestige within the community, and others want to emulate that. Because, as I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the unemployment was relatively high at the time that I stayed in Karanganyar, and my respondents

perceived possibilities of employment, especially for lower-educated members of the community, as quite low, migration becomes an (quite visible) alternative way to gain economic resources. After all, the neighbour with the nice house also succeeded.

However, while Kandel & Massey argue that migration can become normative in migrant-sending communities, and community members might be expected to migrate at some part in their lives as a sort of 'rite of passage' (Kandel & Massey 2002: 982), I would argue that this is not (yet) the case in Cedhaksolo. Classifying migration as a norm like Kandel & Massey do, in my opinion implies that there is a social pressure to do so, and that there might be negative consequences if a member of the community refuses to migrate, and I did not find that in the community I studied. However, I do agree with their observation that migration becomes part of a 'conscious choice' for community members, when they weigh their options for employment (Kandel & Massey 2002: 982). For example, I was often told by the migrants that migrated shortly after they finished high school, that they received advice from (former) schoolmates on how to migrate, which agency to contact, where to migrate to, and so on. Similarly, community members like neighbours, (distant) relatives, or other 'experienced' (ex-)migrants were also cited by respondents on having given advise about migration or talking about their migration experiences. Borrowing Sim & Wee's terminology, the informal, social networks of migrants act therefore as a 'facilitator' in initiating and shaping a migrant's migration process (Sim & Wee 2004: 169). Paired with the visibility of the economic growth of some ex-migrants within the community, migration itself therefore becomes an increasingly visible option to find employment, and it will increasingly become so should more people migrate abroad.

Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction chapter, recruiters from job agencies also periodically came to the village, or to the high schools in Karanganyar City. They, in turn, also paint an ideal picture of migration, and the employment options that entails. I would therefore argue that these agents, too, contribute to the visibility of migration as a valid employment option within the community. Because they also often work together with the BNP2TKI or its field offices, and because the government also hosts trainings for ex-migrants for example, migration also gets a more authoritative, 'official' image.

The different ways in which migration can become visible (like successful ex-migrants, interactions with ex-migrants, recruiters, and such) might not, by themselves, be visible to a large part of the community. However, I would argue that combined, they keep reinforcing the visibility of migration, and the view that migration is a valid, plausible alternative to trying to find work in Karanganyar, and also a possibility to increase one's social-economic standing in the process.

Because of this visibility of migration as a 'good' employment option, I would also argue that it is socially acceptable within the community to migrate. Again, I would not (yet) classify migration as the 'norm' within the community, but I did not find that for example a migrant is being spoken of in a negative way because they migrated abroad. Before I left, I wondered if for example by being unable to find a job in their own communities, or just by leaving their own communities for a relatively long period of time, migrants might also be treated more as an 'outsider'. However, I have not found evidence of this in the field. Migration, within both the community and within the families I have spoken to, is more or less being treated as 'normal'. People in the social networks of the migrants might not always like the distance that migration creates between them, but migration itself is not viewed as a negative phenomenon. Instead, as I mentioned earlier (and will elaborate on in chapter six), migrants that are able to increase their economic resources might even increase their prestige within their community.

4.4. A Power Relation Perspective on Social Relations

In the previous parts I focussed primarily on how social relations can create and influence different types of motivations to migrate. In the following I want to focus a bit further on the power relations inherent in these social relations, how their importance for the further analysis of the migration process.

In the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that migration is often seen by migrants as a way to provide economic resources for their families which they might not have been able to gain in their own communities. From that lack of economic resources might spring motivations to migrate, like providing basic life necessities for family members. In this chapter, I have viewed the creations to migrate mostly from a social relations point of view, and the roles that the broader family structure, or the community of the migrants play. Viewed from an agency-structure point of view, I would hereby argue that I focussed more on the structure side, because I would argue that at this stage of migration, the structure has a greater influence on the migration process. While migrants of course make the definitive decision to migrate or not, the motivations to migrate are in my opinion mostly supplied by the structure (in this case the social relations within Cedhaksolo) in which they find themselves. Of course, agency-structure relations are not black and white, and migration in this case is also a dynamic between the two, long-term economic benefits and commodity purchasing motivations can for example also be viewed as desires by the migrants themselves to improve their living conditions, while still being influenced by the visibility of the economic growth of 'successful' ex-migrants.

However, focussing on family relations in particular, I would argue that through the motivations to care for family members, there is an inherent, unequal power relation between the migrant and their family. In some cases, as I will expand on further in the next chapter, this relation is visible through family members pooling together money to cover the costs of a migrant's migration period, thereby creating a more or less tangible economic debt. However, I found that in most cases in Cedhaksolo, migrants do not have to pay upfront for migration, and therefore there is no direct need for family to lend money to the migrant. As I mention in the introduction of this thesis, I very much agree with Stuart Philpott's concept of remittance obligations, and his argument that the act of remitting money is both symbolic for the social relations between a migrant and their family, and a way to maintain that relation (Philpott 1968: 473-474). I would therefore argue that both in cases with and without an economic debt to family members, there is still a social debt, in the form of a reciprocal relation between the migrant and their family, because the migrant remits funds in exchange for continued relations with their family back home. While there is no direct exchange of goods, and the migrant probably does not literally buy social relations with their remittances, there therefore still is (as Sahlins puts it) a generalized reciprocal relation present between the migrant and their family, whereby in this case the expectation of continued social relations lies at its basis (Sahlins 1972: 193-194).

When reversing Sahlins' generalized reciprocity theory, and looking at this power relation from the family's perspective, the perceived inability of a migrant to care for their family does not (necessarily) mean that that for example their spouse implicitly or explicitly tries to get the prospective migrant to go to work abroad. This power relation is not necessarily constituted through force, or as Levitt & Glick Schiller describe, through 'leverage' (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1013). Instead, I would argue that a migrant's social debt becomes increasingly larger when the migrant (or their family) feels they cannot for example adequately care for their family. As this debt grows larger, so does the motivation to migrate abroad, or at least the perception of migration as a way to fulfil this debt.

At this stage of migration, when for example the motivations to migrate are being formed, and agreements are being made on how to spend the possible remittances that are earned during it, there is not yet any remittance of economic resources between the migrant and their family, as the migrant is still at home. However, I would argue that precisely at this stage, the 'social debt' might be largest, because the reciprocal relation between a migrant and their family is still present, but because of lack of economic resources might mean that the migrant feels unable to care for their family, thereby creating the motivation to migrate. Shortly said, the lack of economic resources therefore creates a social debt that can be filled by migrating abroad.

However, as I will argue in the following chapters, this social debt is (hopefully) filled during the course of migration abroad. As money is being earned the economic needs of the family will often decrease, and through alleviating that need the authority within the power relations shift from the family towards the migrant.

Chapter 5: Working Abroad

If you have any problems with your employer, you must notify us [the BP3TKI] or your job agency. Inform the job agency first. (...) You should not run away.

-Ibu Putri, speaker at a preparatory meeting at BP3TKI Yogyakarta

In the previous chapter I focussed on how motivations to migrate, and how intentions to spend remittances are constructed in the period leading up to a migrant moving abroad. In this chapter, I will primarily focus on the period when the migrant is working abroad to earn these remittances. I will hereby discuss the factors that influence both the migrant's ability to earn remittances, and their ability to send those remittances back home. I will thereby also elaborate a bit further on the (power) relation between for example the migrant, their job agency, and governmental agencies.

5.1. Types of Migration Procedures

In order to properly discuss the migration periods abroad, I think it might be useful to first explain what process a migrant has to go through before they are sent abroad, after they have made the decision to migrate. It is hereby important to note that, as I also wrote in chapter three, there are different procedures for migration to 'G2G-countries' where the Indonesian government has negotiated agreements about labour migration with South Korea and Japan, and countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, where no formal agreements have been made.

Non-G2G Procedures

Because the largest portion of my respondents (and all of my respondents in Cedhaksolo) has migrated to non-G2G countries, I will firstly explain a bit about the more or less standard agency practices for these countries. Of course, the specific policies might differ from agency to agency, but the procedure from the migrant's side was usually about the same. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the larger job agencies do not have offices in every region of Java, but instead send recruiters to the villages to find people who want to work abroad. Alternatively, as I have also mentioned, prospective migrants might be informed about agencies by members of the community who have worked abroad before. In both cases, however, the prospective migrant has to make an appointment to go to (one of) the job agency's office(s). For example, most of the ex-migrants I spoke to in Cedhaksolo were recruited by an agent that came to Karanganyar. Afterwards, they had to go to the agency's office in Jakarta to finalise the migration procedures.

Depending on for example the agencies' policies and the availability of work, the prospective migrant then either has an interview with an employee from the job agency, or the prospective employer

abroad might send someone to pick the new migrants to work abroad at their location. If a prospective migrant is accepted, he or she then has the option to sign the contract and begin the rest of their migration procedure.

Generally speaking, labour documents like visas are arranged by the job agency, but in order to do so the migrant has to submit their passport and personal identification to the job agency in this period. Furthermore, a medical check-up is arranged to see if the prospective migrant is fit to work.

Once all the necessary documents are arranged and (as with most of my research population), if the migrant is classified as an 'unskilled labourer', they have to follow a (often six-day) training course at the BNP2TKI's field offices. During these training sessions, the migrants are for example prompted to check (or read) their contracts to see what their rights are and they are told of the negative consequences if they terminate their contract prematurely and 'run away' (more about this later on in the chapter). During one of the preparatory training sessions that I joined during my fieldwork, the BPT3KI (the BNP2TKI's field office) in Yogyakarta also hosted a motivational session for migrants, where they were told to work hard, so they can earn plenty of money abroad. Returning to the point about the visibility of the potential success related to migration I made in the previous chapter, I would argue that this motivation to migrate is repeated in these sessions as well, to remind the prospective migrants why they wanted to migrate in the first place. What I hereby personally found interesting was that, during this specific session, the speaker also linked the obligation to work hard to religious motivations. Working hard, accepting overtime, and thereby earning money abroad, was hereby linked to God's plan for these prospective migrants: "God wants you to be successful."

G2G Procedures

As I mentioned in the beginning of this part, there are some difference in procedures between migrants that go to work in G2G countries, and migrants that work elsewhere. In my opinion, the biggest difference between the two schemes is that, in order to work in a G2G country, the migrant is required to speak the local language (Korean or Japanese). In practice, this means that before a migrant is even registered by the BNP2TKI, they have to take a language course first, usually for the duration of about six months. Twice per year, a standardised language test is held in locations across the country (in the case of migrants from the Karanganyar regency, this is held at the Sebelas Maret university in Solo). Only after a migrant passes the language test are they allowed to register as a prospective G2G migrant at the BNP2TKI. However, as I also mention in the introduction of this thesis, this language course is expensive. For example, one of the Korean language schools in Karanganyar that I visited asked around three million rupiahs (around 200) euros for a six-month course. By comparison, a migrant that works in Malaysia might earn around three million rupiahs per

month, according to a spokesperson from BP3TKI Yogyakarta. While the wages in South Korea are higher, this still is a large sum of money to pay, especially so given the fact that it is not guaranteed that the migrant eventually passes the language test.

In the case of G2G migration, the role of the BNP2TKI sort of replaces that of the job agencies in 'regular' migration processes. Once a migrant passes the language course, and has had a medical check-up to confirm that they are fit to work, they are almost certainly guaranteed a job in either South-Korea or Japan (depending on the language they speak). Migrants that pass the language test are namely added to a national pool from which migrants are selected to work abroad. Until this pool is depleted, no new prospective migrants are allowed to take the language test, thereby almost certainly guaranteeing employment for migrants that pass the test.

Similarly to 'regular' migration, the migrant then has to follow a training at one of the BP3TKI offices. While I have not been present at the specific training sessions for G2G migrants, the contents of the training, focussed on migrants' rights, migrants' responsibilities, and motivating them, largely stay the same.

Final Approval

In the previous chapter I mentioned that migration should be viewed from a social relations perspective, because they influence the shape that a migration process will take. However, at this point in the migration process, after the trainings and the like, social relations also decide if a migration period even takes place. Before a migrant is (officially, though I have heard of plenty of cases where it was not necessary) allowed to work abroad under both the G2G and non-G2G schemes, they have to get permission from either their spouse or parents, and their village head. While I was told that this measure has partially been implemented to protect the migrant (or, as I was also told by one village head, to make it easier to repatriate their body in the few cases that something goes extremely wrong abroad), it also means that a migrant has to negotiate with their social networks, their family and community, to receive permission to move abroad. Within families, as I wrote before, this can mean that the migrant has to make agreements with their family about wanting to care for them, how to spend the money, and the like. With regards to the approval of their village head, I found that in most villages they serve as a rubber stamp, though I did hear of a few cases (though not in Cedhaksolo) where they asked for a small amount of money to approve the migration abroad. In terms of power relations, this means that the migrant is still very much dependant on their family and community structures in order to be able to make decisions about working abroad.

5.2. How to Pay for Migration?

Having explained the different schemes for migration from a more agencies-based perspective, I now want to return to focus to the migrants from Karanganyar, and the ways in which their migration periods are funded. Though job agencies facilitate the move of migrants abroad, they do not do so for free. For example, one of the job agents in Solo that I visited, specialised in sending migrants to Malaysia, charges around 1600 Malaysian Ringgits (around five million Indonesian rupiah, or 340 euros) per migrant for the service of sending them abroad. In comparison, while in Malaysia, the prospective migrant will earn around 1430 Ringgits a month (based on 26 workdays per month, for nine and a half hours of work per day).

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, before I entered the field I assumed that most families would pay for the migration of one of their family members by pooling together money. That migrant then could move abroad, and hopefully earn enough money to pay back the family, and increase their economic circumstances. However, during my research I found that only a small portion of my respondents had to pay a lump sum up front to the job agency. Those that did have to pay upfront told me that they sold valuables, like jewellery and vehicles in order to pay for the fees of the job agencies, and that they preferred that to borrowing the money from family members.

Instead of paying a lump sum upfront, as for example Killias also describes in her article, migrants usually pay their debts (the costs for migration, the agency fees, and such) through having their wages deducted (Killias 2010: 901). While the height of the fees and the wages tends to differ between the job agencies and the migrants that I spoke to, generally speaking the migrant's wages are deducted for about six to nine months, whereby the migrants themselves only receive a small amount of their wages so they can buy necessities like personal care products (board and lodging is in many cases either provided, or heavily subsidised by the employers).

While the BP3TKI employees that I spoke to say that wage deductions are also part of the contracts that they point out to migrants when they join their training, I have not heard that it is also national policy for job agencies to choose wage deductions over the 'lump sum up front scheme'. However, I would argue that job agencies prefer this scheme because, on the one hand it might seems more attractive to prospective migrants, and on the other hand it gives the employers of the migrants a larger security that their workers keep working for them. With regards to the migrants' point of view, I would argue that because under the wage deduction scheme, migrants no longer have to pay for their migration up front, thereby no longer having to either borrow money or (according to some migrants I spoke to, preferably) sell their valuables in order to pay for migration, and they possibly even receive a small amount of money up front to pay for immediate costs, it might seem more

attractive to them. However, on the other hand I would argue that from a job agency or employer's point of view, the wage deduction scheme also means that they have more influence over their workers.

I ended the previous chapter with an analysis of the power relations between migrants and their families. I thereby mostly focussed on the migrant's social debt towards their family, because the economic debt was less present if a migrant does not have to pay for migration up front. However, I would hereby argue that under the wage deduction scheme, this economic debt is transferred to either the job agency or the employer abroad (depending on the agreements between the two). From the BP3TKI training sessions and interviews with job agents, I found that the repayment of this debt is an important part of the migrant's contract. Until this debt is paid, the migrant not only does not earn a reasonable wage abroad, but it also prevents them from terminating their contracts prematurely. As I will mention further on in this chapter, the working and living conditions of migrants might not always be satisfactory to them, and it happens that migrants, when they are abroad, want to quit their initial jobs to either return home, or to find another employer. However, for example all of the contracts of the migrants present at the BP3TKI preparatory training that I joined, contained a clause that stated that if a migrant terminates their contract, or 'runs away' as it was described, they not only still have to pay their large debts to the agencies, but they also incur a fine and have to pay for their own transport home.

In the previous chapter I also described that a lack of economic resources is often one of the key reasons why migrants migrate abroad. Paying this debt would have therefore been nearly impossible for these migrants. I would therefore argue that while the 'deducted wages' scheme might seem appealing to migrants, it also ties them to their employers through the debt they have to work off. Leaving is almost impossible because it can bankrupt the migrant, issues can only be addressed towards the job agency or, in the more urgent cases, the BNP2TKI, and protests and demonstrations can lead to migrants losing their jobs, and then still having to pay back the debts, fines, and transport back home. The BNP2TKI meanwhile, though it might not necessarily be explicit government policy, in my opinion implicitly endorses these kinds of agency policies as they explain the scheme to the migrants during the training sessions, and continually warn them to not run away because the agencies have the right to fine them.

With regards to migrants' vulnerability, and dependency on their job agencies, I think it is also important to differentiate between 'legitimate' job agencies, that do actually arrange jobs for the prospective migrants, and 'scammers', who do not do so. During my fieldwork in Indonesia, but for example also during my preliminary research in the Netherlands, I heard from and about migrants

that paid a significant amount of money upfront to a job agency, supposedly for the costs of arranging a job, arranging transport, fees, and the like. However, often after they are sent to a country abroad, it turned out that no jobs were actually arranged, nor did they often have the proper visa to work abroad. For example, one of my respondents in Karanganyar paid around six million rupiah (around 400 euros) to a job agency (supposedly) in order to get a job in Brunei. However, after arriving at the airport, he was not picked up by anyone. It turned out that he paid a quite large sum of money, but only received what essentially was a one-way ticket to Brunei. The work visa and the job were not arranged.

In cases like these, where the 'job' agency does not actually arrange a job for the prospective migrants, I think it is logical that they ask for a payment upfront. While, as I argued above, the wage-deduction schemes for fee payment is not ideal in terms of migrants' vulnerability, it at least more or less guarantees that the migrant will have a job on arrival in a different country, or the job agency is not able to deduct their wages and will earn no money. Payment upfront might therefore appear to be a suitable alternative, as it implies that the migrant has more freedom to for example terminate their contracts, as they have no, or a lower, debt to the job agency. However, as I showed above, the payment upfront scheme leaves the possibility for job agencies to take the money, send the migrant abroad, and then don't deliver on their promise of a job. Therefore, both payment schemes have the potential to leave the migrant in a vulnerable position, whereby the employer of the job agency has the largest say in how the migration period, or the (potential) working experience, abroad takes shape.

5.3. Working Conditions While Abroad

In chapter three I showed that the potential income for migrants differs from country to country. Malaysia, for example, has lost part of its popularity as a destination country because the wages there were perceived to be increasingly similar to those in Indonesia. On the other hand, I often heard that for example G2G countries (like South Korea) are seen as more desirable, because the wages there are significantly higher than in Indonesia, even though they are more expensive, or more difficult, to migrate to. I thereby also explained that the availability of work, and the different types of work that a migrant can apply for (disregarding, at this moment, the ethnic and gendered biases that also influence this), also tends to differ from country to country. South Korea, for example, mostly employed migrants in the electronics manufacturing or assembly industries, while for example migrants in Hong Kong, at least from the migrants that I spoke to, tended to have worked in the domestic work sector.

Similarly, the working conditions of migrants abroad also tend to differ from country to country, or even from sector to sector and employer to employer. While the specific working conditions for migrants in each country (Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea) that at least more than one of my respondents migrated to, might be a topic for a thesis on its own, I do want to (briefly) discuss the conditions in relation to for example migrant vulnerability and their ability to earn remittances while abroad, from a migrants' point of view. I hereby firstly want to expand a bit further on the implications of working in either the formal or informal sector while abroad.

As I mentioned before, the availability of jobs tends to differ from country to country, and (according to what I have been told in the field) therefore G2G countries like South Korea are predominately destination countries for formal, documented migrants, because of the governmental agreements that make it possible for Indonesians to work there. During interviews with employees of for example the BP3TKI I heard that from a policy-perspective, formal migration is preferred because it (supposedly) reduces the vulnerabilities of migrants while abroad, because migrants for example have to have a job contract and proper documents to work abroad, thereby giving the Indonesian and foreign government (at least a semblance of) the possibility of oversight over the migration process of the migrants. As mentioned in chapter three, this for example also includes the mandatory, preliminary training that migrants receive before they move abroad.

This focus on work in the formal sector, including the training sessions, has been in place since 2007, and is part of the Indonesian government's reaction to quite highly-publicised cases of migrant abuse while abroad. As I for example also mentioned earlier, at one point in time, abuse of migrant domestic workers in Saudi Arabia occurred so often that a moratorium on migration there was implemented. The migrants that I interviewed in Cedhaksolo also often told me that they heard about cases of abuse, or even of migrants dying while abroad. While fatal abuse or accidents abroad luckily did not happen to the migrants that I did research with, I did speak to several people (outside Cedhaksolo) who were maltreated by either their employers or job agents while they were abroad.

For example, in a different Karanganyar village I spoke to Ibu Utari, a woman who worked as a domestic worker in Singapore from 1997 until 1999. She liked working for her employers in Singapore, but when she wanted to go back there a second time in 2003; she was asked by them to go work for a (related) family in Malaysia. There, she lived in their employer's house, together with two other Indonesian domestic workers. Ibu Utari had to work every day, with little to no days off. Once, she saw one of the other migrants get slapped by their employer, but she told me she never received any physical abuse herself. However, when the employers were out of the house, the other two Indonesian migrants and she had to stay inside, while every window and door was locked. There

were also cameras present in the house, so everything that went on inside it could be watched by their employers. At one point during Bu Utari's stay in Malaysia, a candle fell over while her employers were out of the house. Though the other domestic workers and she could quickly extinguish the small fire that ensued, the locked windows and doors made the house a fire hazard for them. While she worked in Malaysia, she was also not allowed to contact her family, and had no access to a phone. However, she managed to occasionally send letters home with the help of her employers' driver. The other two Indonesian migrants eventually ended up running away from the house, even though their passports and identity papers were kept by their employers, but Bu Utari finished her two-year contract with the family.

While the situation that Ibu Utari encountered abroad is of course to a certain extend the result of the specific circumstances of her migration period, it does contain many of the different kinds of abuse that I often heard about, like restrictions of freedom of movement, physical abuse, forced overtime or lack of days off, and loss of identity papers. Along with sexual abuse, these kinds of maltreatment of migrants had been often published about in the media, and were known in policy and migrant circles. However, as for example Sim and Wee (2004: 191) also argue, domestic work, behind the sometimes literally closed doors of the employers' houses, might be more susceptible to abuse because of the relative invisibility of migrants that work in it, especially if those migrants are not allowed to (periodically) leave the house. Because Ibu Utari migrated in 2003, she did not have to join a training session before moving abroad, but she did have a contract, and she did have the proper documents needed to work in Malaysia. However, even though Ibu Utari was a documented migrant, she had no means of communicating her situation to the proper authorities. As I mentioned earlier, the doors and windows were literally locked, and her means of communication with the outside world were limited. It is therefore sometimes difficult for the 'outside world' to estimate the treatment of migrants abroad, because in cases like Ibu Utari's, the migrants have little means to let others know how they are treated.

During interviews with BP3TKI staff, I found out that stories like Ibu Utari's were, or are, quite commonly heard of, especially the lack of means of communication. Therefore, I was told, since recent regulations each migrant has the right to a communications device, as a basic clause in most job contracts, or at least those inspected by the BP3TKI. While a phone might not appear, at first glance, to be a deterrent of abuse, it does act as a possible lifeline for migrants to contact their job agent or the BNP2TKI if they find themselves in a situation wherein for example the clauses in their contracts are broken, or they are maltreated by their employer. Of course, as I argued before, the role of communications devices in preventing abuse might not necessarily be large if the BNP2TKI implicitly facilitates certain types of abuse, like the taking away of identity documents, by legitimising

these practices in their trainings. Furthermore, while this BNP2TKI policy does draw the attention of migrants to the importance of having means to communicate with the outside world, it does not necessarily mean that it also stops employers from taking away migrants' phones. After that, the migrant, again, has little means to communicate how she is being treated to the relevant authorities.

While documented migrants, that migrate through the official BNP2TKI procedures, are given information about their rights and such, I also found from interviews with a migrants' rights NGO in Solo that the government's role in mediating the grievances of migrants abroad is sometimes lacking. Officially, the Indonesian embassies abroad are supposed to help mediate disputes between migrants and their employers or job agencies. However, I was told that in many cases, the embassies do not investigate for example claims of abuse. The official reason given, according to the NGO, is that the embassies lack the funds to properly address these issues. However, according to my NGO-contact, sometimes the embassies also do not feel like it is their task to investigate the problems of Indonesian migrants abroad, or they might even tacitly side with the employers.

Though officially, the BNP2TKI's programs on the protection of migrants, like the trainings, and the inspection of some contracts is, in my opinion, a noteworthy initiative to reduce the vulnerability of migrants abroad, it does not necessarily prevent migrants from receiving abuse. Killias for example argues that restrictions of the freedom of movement of (female) migrants, like Ibu Utari's case I described above, are sometimes seen as legitimate measures, taken by employers and job agencies to 'shield' them from the potential dangers abroad (Killias 2010: 908). Therefore, even documented workers, supposedly protected by the BNP2TKI, might encounter situations that they would rather try to avoid.

Killias furthermore argues that in certain cases, it might therefore even be more beneficial for migrants to migrate abroad illegally, through undocumented ways, if they manage to find trustworthy employers, because they then have more freedom to negotiate the terms of their own employment (Killias 2010: 911). In Cedhaksolo, there were (as far as I know) two respondents who migrated illegally, one knowingly, and one not. Earlier in this chapter I described how one of my respondents was sent to Brunei without the proper documents, nor having been given a job. However, he eventually found a good employer at a stone quarry, and ended up working abroad for thirteen years. In hindsight, though he was scammed, and though he migrated illegally, he therefore did not regret his choice, as he was treated well abroad, and managed to earn enough money to support his family. Mas Eko, the other Cedhaksolo migrant that (knowingly) migrated illegally, did not even own a passport, and worked as a driver in Malaysia, a job he found through common acquaintances with his employers. Because he migrated when he was still quite young, he felt as if

his employers were a kind of adoptive family in Malaysia, who also treated him accordingly. He worked there for five years, and managed to send money to his siblings because of it.

The large majority of my (Cedhaksolo) respondents, however, migrated through legal, documented ways, and had migration experiences in which the benefits were perceived to have outweighed the hard work, and the distance to their families. While having to work overtime (in the case of the job agency from Solo I mentioned above, about one and a half hour a day) as part of the job contract, or the taking away of passports, were often cited inconveniences, they were not necessarily seen as abuse, but merely part of the job abroad. However, as I also mentioned above, though these practices may in my opinion not necessarily be called abuse, they do have the potential to place the migrants in a vulnerable position abroad. Therefore, while I did not necessarily want to outright criticise government initiatives to protect the rights of migrants abroad, in this part I wanted to draw attention to what Castles calls the 'contradictions within the policy formation process'(Castles 2004: 868), in that Indonesian government policy that appears aimed at reducing the vulnerability of migrants, tacitly also allows job agents to for example reduce the freedom of movement of these migrants, thereby potentially increasing their vulnerability.

5.4. Maintaining Social Relations

I ended the previous chapter with a description of the power relations inherent in the motivations to migrate abroad, and the 'social debt' that difficulty to provide for one's family creates. The period in the migration process that I describe in this chapter, when the migrant is (hopefully) earning their wages abroad, is the moment where the migrant starts to pay back this social debt, and thereby also changes the power relations inherent in the relations they maintain with their families and home community.

However, I first want to expand a bit further on this maintenance of relations, and the ways in which a migrant can stay in touch with their family back home. In the previous part of this chapter I elaborated on the practice of taking communications devices away from migrants, and the attempt to curb these practices by the BNP2TKI. While I thereby explained this in relation to potential (prevention of) abuse against migrants, access to a communications device of course also allows the migrant to maintain social relations with their social networks. Typically, at least according to the respondents I spoke to, a migrant works abroad for periods of two years. Combined with the physical distance, this period of absence has the potential to disrupt social relations. As Coe for example argues, the physical distance of migrants can in turn create social distance, through which social ties become more difficult to maintain, and can for example exacerbate problems that were already present within a household before the migration took place (Coe 2011: 159). Of course, as I

also found during my fieldwork, migrants also want to connect to their families back home because they miss them, and the long absence might give both migrant and family a certain sense of abandonment.

In the past decade, cross-border communication has been made easier by reasonably affordable phones, and increasingly accessible internet services. Therefore, most of my respondents who migrated in the past few years said they were able to maintain connections with their home through their (mobile) phones, or those that they borrowed from acquaintances or their employers. Where a respondent of mine who migrated in the 90's sent a one letter a month to his family, more recent migrants had the chance to talk weekly, or even daily to the people back home.

On the other hand, ease of communication does not always mean that a migrant can overcome the physical limitations that the distance between them and their families create, especially in for example household tasks. Migration therefore often also entails a renegotiation or redistribution of work tasks within the (extended) family (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1016). In my own field, for example, in the case of families with children, the grandparents of one of the parents would often help with raising the children, while (one of the) parent(s) was working abroad, especially if their spouse also had a job in Indonesia. Though while the physical absence of the migrant therefore might have led to their tasks back home being (temporarily) taken over by another family member, I would argue that they compensate by earning remittances abroad, thereby still fulfilling a role of care-giver within the family. Using Baldassar et al.'s typology of transnational care (Baldassar et al. 2006: 205), I would therefore argue that the (perceived) obligation of the migrant to care for their family members remains, even though the migrant is physically absent, and that therefore they (temporarily) shift towards a more or less economic form of care-giving.

However, the ability to remit funds back home to a certain degree also depends on the working conditions of the migrant while abroad. For example, I mentioned several times in this chapter that it is quite common practice to deduct a migrant's wages for first few months of their migration period, thereby making it nearly impossible for them to remit anything during that period. Furthermore, I have also heard stories about employers, often in the domestic workers sector, that try to withhold part of the migrant's wages. For example, the employers of Ibu Utari, whose working experience in Malaysia I briefly described above, sent about half of her wages to Ibu Utari's husband and two children. The other half of her wages were put into a bank account in her name, that she was supposed to be able to access after her contract ended. However, after completing her two-year contract, Ibu Utari found out that her employers tried to keep the money from that bank account, and she was only able to access it after filing a complaint with the bank.

I did, however, also find that migrants often make a conscious decision to either remit while they are abroad, or to bring the remittances back home with them (either cash, or in a bank account) after finishing their migration period. I mentioned briefly that Ibu Utari worked in Singapore, before she worked with the family in Malaysia. During an interview, I asked her if she also remitted her wages while abroad. While I wrote earlier that, during her work in Singapore, her employers sent half her wages to her husband, so he could care for their children. However, when Ibu Utari worked in Malaysia, she did not yet have children. Instead she wanted to use her remittances to buy a house, and did therefore not remit money during her stay there. During that stay abroad, she told me, she would only sent back money if there was an emergency or the like, the rest of her wages she kept for herself until she returned. Had she remitted every month, she was afraid that her husband would have abused the money, spending it before she was able to return from Singapore. While I, in the previous chapter, therefore briefly mentioned that migrants often make agreements on what to spend the earned remittances on, in practice migrants are not always sure that those agreements will be upheld.

One of the more extreme cases I hereby heard about was of a female migrant from the Kebumen region in Yogyakarta. She migrated abroad in order to earn enough money to build a house. During her work abroad she therefore periodically remitted money to her husband, so he could start on building their new home, while she finished her migration period. When the woman returned to Kebumen, the house was finished. The only problem was that her husband was already living in it, together with his new wife, having registered the deed to the house and the land under his name alone. However, other respondents I spoke to mentioned that they heard similar stories, with almost exactly the same details, in other parts of Java. While I therefore cannot say for sure to which degree this story is true and has happened in several cases on Java, or has become embellished over the years as part of a Javanese or Indonesian rumour, it does in my opinion show that there is a discourse present about the uncertainty of a spouse's fidelity while the migrant is abroad.

However, on the other hand I also heard from migrants that, while they had made agreements about remitting money, or about saving it to for example invest in a business when they get back, they sometimes are not able to do so because of their lifestyle choices abroad. In the previous chapter I already mentioned that some migrants move abroad in order to earn money to spend back home. However, I also heard of several migrants who already spent all of their earned money while they are still abroad. This, of course negatively impacts their ability to send remittances back home. Furthermore, Mas Eko, whom I wrote about earlier migrated illegally to Malaysia and remitted half of his wages to his family, to care for his siblings, but did not have any savings left because he spent the rest of his wages abroad.

As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, I like Stuart Philpott's concept of 'remittance obligations', whereby the act of sending remittances is seen as symbolic for the social relations of the migrant, but also serve as a way to maintain those relations (Philpott 1968: 473-474). In most cases, I found, the agreements that are being made before a migrant moves abroad, also determine the frequency with which a migrant wants to remit. The social debt of the migrant, as for example care-giver for a family, is therefore usually fulfilled by mutual agreement of both 'sides' in the power equation or, differently put: the migrant usually intends to maintain the generalized reciprocal relation (see Sahlins 1972: 193-194) with their family by fulfilling the social debt inherent in that relation through the earning and remitting of wages abroad. If a migrant remits periodically, for example monthly, I would argue that this social debt lessens with each transaction, as hopefully the remittances are able to provide the basic needs for a family, or gradually improves their living conditions. I would thereby argue that because this social debt, in the form of a migrant's (perceived) inability to care for their family, is decreasing, the balance of power within the family's relation gradually shifts towards the migrant. If a migrant takes a lump sum of funds back home after migration, the debt can of course be viewed as fulfilled by a single exchange, though I would argue that through the act of working abroad alone, and by maintaining relations with their family abroad, migrants also balance their social debt by seeking to fulfil the role of care-giver abroad.

However, taking Coe's argument into account that migration, and the physical and social distance it creates, can exaggerate the tensions and problems that are already present within a family (Coe 2011: 159), I would argue that the choice to either remit periodically, as a lump sum, or sometimes not at all, also reflects these tensions. As I for example tried to illustrate with the account of Ibu Utari's act of remitting, the 'trust' between actors within the social relation is also reflected in remittance patterns. Bu Utari preferred not to send money back while she was abroad, as she was afraid her husband would spend it all, only deciding to remit periodically when the necessity and urgency of them was increased when they got children. However, while Philpott argues that a decline in remittances can also lead to, or is a sign of, a deterioration of social relations (Philpott 1968: 474), I personally did not find that a choice to for example bring the lump sum of remittances home instead of periodically remitting negatively impacted the social relations of the migrants I spoke to. Of course, as is often the case with anthropological research, I thereby am not completely sure if there was no (negative) change in relations because of remittance practices, or that my respondents just did not want to talk negatively about their family towards an outsider. However, though none of my respondents (admitted to have) spent all of their remittances abroad, I can imagine that in such a case, social relations might certainly be affected in a negative way, especially following Coe's argument about the exacerbation of problems within families (Coe 2011: 159).

As a closing remark I would like to add that, though authors like Cohen (2011) and Philpott (1968) focus on remittances more or less solely through a social relations lens, whereby a migrant and their families act as agency and structure that determine for example the height and frequency of remittances, I would argue that the act of remitting is also to a certain degree subject to factors outside of the control of either migrant or family. As I for example argued earlier in this chapter, the sometimes vulnerable position of migrants abroad not only can restrict the possibilities of migrants to communicate with their families, but can also reduce their own say in the act of remitting. In Bu Utari's story, for example, the act of remitting was done by her employers, and was almost completely out of her control until her working period was over. Similarly, because the passports of some migrants are taken away, this can make it difficult for them to open bank accounts abroad, thereby also forcing them to for example take the remittances back as a lump sum, or involve their employers or external cash-transfer agencies in the remittance process. In terms of power relations, I would argue that this means that, while a migrant is fulfilling their social debt to their family, whereby the migrant's 'power' within the family relation increases, they might be doing so from a vulnerable position within the relation with their employers, or other institutions that transfer their remittances.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate further on remittance practices in relation to the motivations to migrate that I identified in the previous chapter, as well as on the changing power relations within the family, and the implications that it has on the spending of the remittances after the migrant returns home.

Chapter 6: Using Remittances

I don't regret working abroad. If I had stayed, I might not have had a job at all. All I have now is because of my work abroad.

-Pak Darto, ex-migrant.

In the previous chapters I focussed on how motivations to migrate and intentions to spend the resulting remittances are created, and the different factors that can influence a migrant's ability to earn remittances while abroad. In this chapter I will primarily discuss the period after a migrant returns home. I will hereby discuss how intentions to spend remittances compare to the actual spending of those remittances, and for example how the migrant's social relations that influenced the initial motivation to migrate changed after the return home.

6.1. Motivations to Migrate Revisited

In chapter four I argued for a classification of the motivation of (Cedhaksolo) migrants to migrate abroad, based on three non-exclusive categories: 'basic necessities', 'long-term economic benefit', and 'commodity purchasing'. I thereby argued that these motivations are created by a perceived need by migrants, like a lack of economic resources, and that they are made more visible and plausible by the presence or a relatively large amount of migrants within the (Cedhaksolo) community. In practice, I found that these motivations to migrate are often reflected in the agreements about allocating remitted funds, which migrants make before moving abroad. For example, migrants who want to improve their economic circumstances might make an agreement with their spouse to use remittances in order to set up or expand a business, and migrants who feel unable to care for their families under non-migration circumstances might agree to remit in order to provide their basic necessities.

The motivations to migrate are thereby also, in my opinion, reflected in the agreements on the frequency and height of the remittances. In the previous chapter I already elaborated on the possible reasons (from a structure-perspective) for the various remittance frequencies (for example monthly, or only after finishing migration) that migrants apply while abroad. However, returning to the motivations to migrate, I want to briefly focus on what I think can be described as the 'urgency' of migration, that in my opinion also influences the frequency of remittances. Migrants that move abroad because they want to care for family members for example, in my opinion, probably remit more frequently, because their remittances might be used to provide basic necessities for their family back home. In such a case the migrant more or less has to remit frequently, because a lack of remittances might lead to difficulties for the family to fulfil their basic needs. On the other hand,

migrants that work abroad because they want to invest in a business probably have less of an urgency to remit, because they can also use their money after they return home to fulfil that motivation.

Ibu Utari, for example, in the story that I described in the previous chapter, preferred to take the lump sum of remittances back home at the end of her stay, so her husband could not misuse them. As she wanted to use them to buy a house, remitting monthly was not a necessity. However, when she had a child that she wanted to care for, the urgency for her remittances became greater, and she (her employers) therefore remitted money each month. Her motivation to care for her family involved a greater urgency than her motivation to spend money to buy a house.

I would hereby like to add that though I found that migrants make agreements with for example their spouses or other family members on how to spend remittances, thereby trying to fulfil their motivations to migrate, I would not categorise this as a 'family strategy', like Engelen, Kok & Paping (2004) for example focus on in their article. In my opinion, the phrase 'family strategy' implies that (in this case) migration choices are the result of rational deliberation within the family about for example the destination country, or the spending of remittances. However, I found during my own fieldwork, as I also mentioned earlier, that there are structures in place that to a certain degree determine the possible courses of action that a migrant can take in their migration process. Indeed, as Engelen et al. also argue, on the one hand, migrants and their families do not exist within a vacuum, but are subjected to and influenced by broader social and cultural structures (Engelen et al. 2004: 249). Furthermore, in my opinion political structures, like national and provincial policy-making are underexposed in their writing. While, on the other hand, it is almost impossible to determine the exact considerations that migrants made before starting on a certain migration path (Engelen et al. 2004: 249). Nor, if I might add, is it in my opinion a valid methodology to assume that all migrants make purely rational decisions. As I for example mentioned in chapter three, Malaysia, while having a relatively low(er) wage level, is still a popular destination for Indonesian migrants, as they perceive Malaysia as having a similar culture. From an economic (improvement) point of view, a decision made on such cultural factors might appear illogical. Family strategies, if applied to a research context, might therefore also be differently defined (with for example regards to terms like 'rationality') depending on the focus and background of the researcher.

Instead, I agree with Creed that bargaining is a common part of the agreement-making process in families, and that it is more important to focus (should one use the term 'family strategy') on the socio-cultural dimensions of this bargaining, and strategy-formulation (Creed 2000:347). I therefore elaborated in the first chapter on how exactly family is defined in the context of my research.

Of course, as I also argued in the previous chapter, though authors like Philpott (1968) and Cohen (2011) focus on remittances and remittance practices from a social relations point of view, in some cases the frequency of sending remittances back home is determined by factors outside of a migrant's control. Like I also described in the previous chapter, working conditions for example influence both remittance amounts and abilities. In such a case, there might then be a difference between the intention to remit funds, and the possibilities to. A migrant who wants to care for their family might for example want to remit monthly, but might not be able to if they have no funds to spare because of wage deductions. Therefore, though I do argue that remittance frequencies are to a certain degree an indication or a reflection of the motivations of migrants to work abroad, the broader structures in which the migration takes place, like working conditions, should also be taken for a more complete picture of how remittance practices and spending are related to the motivations for migration.

In my opinion, it is important to look at these social relations, and at these motivations to migrate, because they to a large degree determine how remittances are spent while a migrant is still abroad, but mostly also when the migrant has returned. As I wrote in my theoretical framework, I argue that the period during which remittances are spent could be observed through a 'bargaining position' lens, wherein the different social and power relations (and to a certain degree the broader structures, like government or agency policy) influenced who is 'allowed' to spend the remittances, and how this is determined. In the previous chapters I therefore explained the changing power relations between the migrant and their family. I thereby adopted Sahlins' concept of 'generalized reciprocity' (Sahlins 1972: 193-194) to indicate that a migrant, as a member of a family, has certain duties towards their kin. While it might not necessarily be made explicit within a family context, these might motivate or persuade the prospective migrant to move abroad and earn money for their family. Sahlins thereby argues that, while sending money to family members might seem like an act of altruism, there are most certainly counter-obligations, though they are usually not explicit, nor strictly defined (Sahlins 1972: 194). I thereby argued in the previous chapters that the continuation of social relations, fidelity, family members' proper (agreed upon) spending of remittances and the like are examples of the implicit counter-obligations in the migration processes that I studied in Central Java.

During the last (or the end) phase of migration, these shifted power relations become more visible in my opinion, as the possible remittances that have been saved or have been brought back by the migrant can be spend.

6.2. Intentions Versus Practice

As I argued in the previous parts, migrants and their families usually have certain motivations to migrate, and have a certain idea of what they want to use their potential remittances for. However, making agreements about how to spend remittances in the future might not always mean that those intentions are also made into practice when the migrant returns from abroad.

Before elaborating further on this, however, I think it is important to firstly determine whether there are any remittances left to begin with, after a migrant returns home. For example, in the previous chapter I described the remittance practice of Mas Eko who, though he periodically remitted half his wages to (his aunt, to care for) his siblings, had no saved remittances left after he returned, because he spent them all abroad. However, returning to the urgency of migration, it is also likely that migrants who remit purely to care for their family members, by for example providing basic necessities, have little money left at the end of their migration, because it was all spent while doing so, or they did not plan on saving remittances for the period after migration. In cases such as these, though they are influenced by the motivations to migrate, there are simply no remittances left after the period of migration.

In those cases where there are remittances left, however, I want to further elaborate on how the actual spending of remittances is determined after migration. Having established that motivations to migrate are, to a certain degree, reflected in remittance frequencies I want to further discuss how these motivations to migrate are important to the actual spending of remittances after the remittance period.

In the specific context of my research, I found that these motivations to migrate in the majority of cases are also reflected in the spending of remittances. Migrants that migrate in order to care for family members, for example, often remit money periodically to buy basic necessities for their families, while migrants that want to create more economic opportunities often remit money periodically, or bring back a lump sum, in order to set up or expand businesses back home.

However, as I argued in chapter four, motivations to migrate are not mutually exclusive, and the motivation to care for family members might also mean that (if there are any saved remittances left) migrants want to start a business back home to remove the necessity for other family members to migrate in turn. In Cedhaksolo, I thereby for example found that migrants who had migrated abroad in some point(s) in their lives, sometimes in order to care for family members, sometimes to for example build or buy a new house, afterwards also invested in side businesses like chicken farms. When I visited the village, BP3TKI Central Java and a local women's religious group set up a scheme to help ex-migrants set up a chicken farm as a way of creating economic opportunities in Cedhaksolo

and neighbouring villages, thereby discouraging remigration. Chickens (or chicken products) were thereby seen as a high-demand product, that can be sold for reasonable prices, while being relatively easy to raise. Local actors, like the wife of Cedhaksolo's village head, who was one of my key informants, thereby for example arrange for trainings to take place within the region. Small initiatives like these are, as far as I found, part of the BP3TKI, or the BNP2TKI's policy on reducing remigration rates, by eliminating the economic need to migrate. Besides the Cedhaksolo chicken farms, I also for example joined a micro-credit workshop in the Gunung Kidul regency in Yogyakarta, where the BP3TKI worked together with a local branch of a national bank to help ex-migrants set up businesses. However, though the initiatives sound promising (as, to be fair, most Indonesian government narratives do), I have to add that few people in either Cedhaksolo or the surrounding villages were able to turn a decent profit on their chicken farms. The project therefore was still considered to be in its 'pilot' phase, while adjustments were being made to the trainings and business plans.

Returning to the 'non mutually exclusive' part of my motivations argument, the fact that ex-migrants, with different reasons to move abroad do invest in these enterprises, in my opinion shows that different motivations can simultaneously influence the spending of remittances. However, as I also argued in chapter four, the creation of new economic possibilities within the family or community could also be seen as a form of caring for family members, as it might reduce the need for them to migrate (as an unskilled migrant) in the future, thereby shielding them from for example less than ideal working conditions abroad. Furthermore, while Goldring notes that there is a large body of literature that suggests that migrants primarily use remittances to pay their family's recurring costs, and not necessarily on economic improvement (Goldring 2004: 807), I found that there was a quite substantial percentage of migrants who sought to improve the economic circumstances of themselves or their families through their remittances.

This overlap between different intentions to spend remittances can, however, also come about while the migrant is abroad. In such cases, while a migrant for example might move abroad in order to care for their family members, once they are abroad they might come up with the idea to start a business. While not all of the migrants I spoke to mentioned this, a small(er) amount of Cedhaksolo migrants that I spoke to told me that, while they were abroad, they learned quite abstract skills (like a good work ethic) or more practical ones (like learning a new language) that they perceived as useful when they returned to Cedhaksolo. For example, good work ethics were perceived as beneficial to setting up a business back home. Besides purely economic remittances, some migrants therefore also perceive their migration period as resulting in what Levitt & Lamba-Nieves call 'social remittances': certain modes of behaviour or ideas that migrants learn or pick up abroad (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves

2011: 3). I am not necessarily arguing that these skills that migrants picked up abroad inspired them to for example start a business, but I would argue that these skill make the prospect of for example starting a chicken farm seem more feasible, especially when other ex-migrants in the community are starting one.

While, of course, remitting and spending of remittances takes places within the specific context of a migrant's migration period, in general I found that remittance spending reflects the initial motivations to migrate. As I mentioned before, wanting to care for family members will for example probably mean that the migrant remits money frequently, to pay for basic necessities. During my fieldwork, the large majority of my respondents thereby told me that these initial motivations usually link up with their remittance spending. However, while I did not necessarily notice it in the field, I did mention earlier that I was an outsider in the community, and I can therefore imagine that migrants would leave out 'failed' motivations during their migration periods. Furthermore, as for example Hiller & Diluzio also describe, some of my respondents told me that my interviews prompted them to think about, and try to remember, their migration periods, what they did not necessarily often do, thereby possibly 'co-producing new knowledge and insights' (Hiller & Diluzio 2004: 14). I can thereby imagine that some migrants did not want to remember, or did not want to tell me, about results of their migration that they felt 'ashamed' of.

During my fieldwork I also found that, while migrants might have remittances left at the end of their migration period, this does not necessarily mean that their motivations to migrate are completely fulfilled. For example, one of my respondents partially migrated abroad with the intention of earning enough money to build a house. However, after he returned, and after he started building, the remittances were quickly spent, leaving the house unfinished. In such cases, I would argue, the motivations or the intentions to migrate were present, but they were not completely fulfilled. I can imagine that with for example motivations to care for family members, migrants might want to remigrate if those go unfulfilled, to try to fulfil them thusly. BP3TKI policy, regarding offering workshops and training to improve economic circumstances and prevent remigration, in my opinion also seems aimed at helping fulfil migrants' motivations to migrate, in this case the motivation of long-term economic improvement, if these migrants felt they needed help to achieve it.

However, I did not necessarily encounter an intention to remigrate to fulfil expectations, even if migrants felt they 'failed' or did not completely fulfil them the first time. Though in cases like Ibu Utari, who migrated first to achieve economic independence and buy a house, and migrated again a couple of years later to care for her family, migrants do sometimes migrate multiple times to fulfil different motivations; I did not find that migrants often remigrate because they felt they did not fulfil

their expectations the first time. For example, the respondent I wrote about above, with the unfinished house, wanted to try and find work in Indonesia to earn enough wages to complete it.

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, unemployment rates were perceived to be quite high when I was visited Cedhaksolo, and job opportunities were seen as relatively scarce. However, I found that few migrants remigrated in the first few years after they returned from migration, even if they still had difficulties finding a job in Indonesia, and were not able to completely fulfil the expectations they had before they migrated. Instead, I found that they often for example tried to set up small (side) businesses, with various degrees of success, with the amount of money they had left, or do small jobs in (the vicinity of) Cedhaksolo, like driving people around. While, in hindsight, I could probably have gathered more data on this topic, I found that migrants who (though maybe not explicitly) were not able to completely fulfil their remittance motivations, yet did not want to remigrate, often saw their families as an important part of their live that they did not want to take distance of a second time. For example, migrants with small children often already found the initial migration period difficult, because they missed a large part of their child(ren)'s development. The benefits of migrating a second time, after the first migration period already had questionable results, would thereby not outweigh the drawback of not seeing their child(ren) grow up.

6.3. Bargaining over Remittance Spending

Having established how remittances are spent after migration, I think it is also important to look at who gets to decide about the spending of remittances. As I mentioned earlier, I found that in most cases, the agreements that migrants make before they leave, determine in the largest part how the remittances (if there are any left after migration) are used. Therefore, also returning back to the point I made in the previous chapter that a migrant needs to have permission from their family to migrate, I would argue that besides the migrants themselves, family members like their spouse, or their parents also have a defining say (at least in relation to the initial agreements) in how remittances are spent. Furthermore, as I also argued in chapter four, community 'pressure', through the visibility of some migrants increased economic resources, might result in migrants expecting to earn a similar degree of remittances, in order to spend them on similar, visible signs of economic growth.

Of course, as I also illustrated in the previous chapter, agreements about remittance practices, and remittance spending, are not set in stone. Apart from the broader structures, like working conditions, that influence the availability of remittances in the first place, it is also possible that these agreements regarding remittances are broken by either the migrant or their family. In the previous chapter I thereby for example showed that there was a general narrative present in the Central

Javanese migrant community, about the possibility that a migrant's family might 'run away' with the remitted resources, or spend them for not agreed upon purposes. Though, taking Sahlins' generalized reciprocity as a lens (Sahlins 1972: 194), this unilateral breaking of the 'exchange' between remittances and continued fidelity or family unity, would as Philpott argues also probably break the social relations inherent in the act of remitting (Philpott 1968: 473-474). While I only heard about unilateral breaking of social relations, I also briefly want to mention that, though maybe also possible, I did not find cases where both migrant and family decided to (bilaterally) break off their relation while the migrant was away.

However, I found that in most cases the migrant does remit (either periodically, or brings lump sum home) and their family back home intends to maintain social relations with them, using, as I explained earlier, Sahlins' (1972: 194) theory of generalized reciprocity as a basis. This means that when a migrant returns home, and there are remittances left, the migrant and their family have to decide how to use them. In the previous chapters I tried to analyse the change in power relations between migrants and their families while their migration period progressed. I thereby argued that, while migrants have a 'social debt' before moving abroad, created by for example the feeling of being unable to care for their family, this debt is (hopefully) gradually paid back as the migrant earns remittances abroad, thereby in turn creating (non-obligatory) counter-obligations for their family.

In this chapter, however, I argued that the agreements that are made beforehand to a large extend determine the ways in which remittances are used. This implies that the power relations that are present before migration would also determine the spending of remittances even after these relations have shifted. To a certain degree, it is my opinion that this is the case. The agreements that are being made beforehand, before any remittances were even earned, do provide the general 'guidelines' for the spending of those remittances after the migration period is over. However, I would argue that because the position of the migrant has changed, in relation to the power relation between them and their family, they have a certain authority to change the details of the agreement, or add to it. In the previous part I for example argued that migrants might learn skills abroad that enable or encourage them to set up a business when they return, even if they did not have that motivation to begin with, and almost always in addition to that initial motivation.

While Levitt & Glick Schiller argue that migration might lead to an increase in a migrant's social power, and they for example gain a greater leverage over people (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1013-1014), none of my respondents framed the perceived effects of their migration periods on their social status in such an explicit way. However, in cases where migrants 'added' to their initial motivations, and for example wanted to start a business besides procuring resources to care for

family members, I found that their suggestions were often agreed upon by their spouse, or other relevant family members. Similarly, I found that, while migrants and their families often have a general idea of for example economic improvement through starting a business, sometimes the exact details, like the kind of business, are not yet settled. In such cases, I would argue that the migrant has a determining vote in deciding that, for example, the family invests their remittances in a chicken farm. While I therefore would not necessarily classify the change in a migrants 'power' as an increase in leverage, as in my opinion it implies that a migrant's ideas are implemented without much input from other sources, I do agree that a migrant has a relatively large input in the decision-making process and debate regarding remittance-spending. I would therefore argue that, owing to their migration period abroad, (ex-)migrants have a large say in how the practical details of their motivations, to for example improve their economic opportunities, are given shape, even if they themselves do not frame it in such an explicit way.

I also did not necessarily find evidence for empowerment from a gender-role perspective, as for example Gardiner Barber argues (Gardiner Barber 2002: 56). Though, as I mentioned earlier, gender biases play a role in for example the allocation of jobs, after migrants return from abroad, I did not find that they also described their gender roles being changed, or that they were allowed to do more things than people of their gender are usually allowed to. Furthermore, while Preibisch & Grez for example describe how gender roles might impact migration because women might not be socially allowed to work (Preibisch & Grez 2010: 298), I found that this does not apply to a Central Javanese context, or at least not to my respondents, as I never heard from any of them that for example women are looked down upon when they have a job (abroad).

This power over the practical details of remittance use after migration is to a certain degree the opposite of what a migrant has when they are abroad. As I for example mentioned in the previous chapter, migrants who work abroad to provide for their families often periodically remit (part of) their wages to family members, like a spouse, or a parent, who then uses it to buy basic necessities for themselves and/or other family members. However, in this case, the migrant does not have much input in the actual spending of those remittances, as they might not always know what their family needs, because of the physical distance between them. Of course, this only applies to migrants who (are able to) remit to their families while they are abroad.

However, I would hereby once more like to add that I did not find many cases of 'fights' or arguments between for example a migrant and their spouse regarding remittance practices and spending, nor an increase in social tensions because of them. In the previous chapter, though, I explained how Coe argues that the physical distance between migrants might increase tensions

within family relations (Coe 2011: 159). I would have therefore presumed that such tensions might also be visible when a migrant returns, while for example discussing the use of remittances, when one 'party' in the decision-making process does not agree with the other regarding the use of remittances. While I cannot know for sure, as I also mentioned earlier, I do think that my position as an 'outsider' or a foreigner in the community might have made respondents less eager to share negative stories about their experiences, especially if they relate to close social ties, like family, whom I might also speak to.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As I wrote in the introduction of this thesis, I initially went to Central Java to try and answer the question: "What are the factors influencing the control over remittances of return migrants in Surakarta after their migration period(s)?" In the previous parts I therefore tried to give an overview of the different factors and actors that influence the ways in which the migration period of a labour migrant from Cedhaksolo, or from Central Java, takes shape.

With this research I especially want to show the importance of a focus on the migrants' social relations during the different stages of the migration process. I for example argue that the position of a migrant within a family creates certain obligations for them in terms of caring for those other family members. When I stayed in Central Java, the possibilities of finding work, or the opportunities to create a degree of economic certainty, were seen as quite low and quite few by the large majority of my respondents, both in Cedhaksolo and communities elsewhere in the province. In line with similarly described circumstances (see for example: Coe 2011: 154; Gamburd 2008: 10; Preibisch & Grez 2010: 300), working abroad became a viable, visible alternative to finding work in Indonesia, and to provide economic opportunities and resources for the migrant and their family. Because at the time when I did my research, a large amount of people from Cedhaksolo, and from Central Java, already had migrated abroad, and because of the visible success of some migrants (also 'advertised' by government and job agencies), I argue that the narrative about migrants' success abroad was quite well-established within the community. Opposite to what for example Kandel & Massey describe, however, as I for example also argue in chapter four, labour migration could not be categorised as a social 'norm' within the community I studied (Kandel & Massey 2002: 982), but more as a 'necessary evil', the benefits of which (most notably the possibility of economic growth) outweighing the unfortunate drawbacks (like physical absence and potential maltreatment).

I continued this argument about obligations being created by a migrant's position within a family, by framing migration as the act of fulfilling a 'social debt'. While authors like Philpott describe that migrants often borrow money from friends or family members to pay for their migration costs (Philpott 1968: 474), I found that this explicit economic debt was most often not during the migration period of my respondents, because of the earlier mentioned wage-deduction forms of payment. However, I still argue that the (perceived) inability of a migrant to fulfil social obligations, like caring for family members, in turn creates a 'social debt' that can be fulfilled through the act of moving and earning remittances abroad. As Philpott argues with his concept of remittance obligations, remittances and social relations are linked to a certain degree (Philpott 1968: 473-474). Combining this concept with Sahlins' theory of generalized reciprocity (Sahlins 1972: 193-194), I tried to show in

this thesis how the act of remitting (gradually) reduces a migrant's social debt towards their family, and that the increase in economic resources in turn increases the migrant's standing and 'power' within their family. Given, of course, there are remittances to send back.

With regards to remittance height and frequency, I firstly tried to show that these might depend on the 'quality' of social relations. Because tensions within a family might increase because of the physical distance between the migrant and their family (Coe 2011: 159), I argued that as remittances can be seen as symbolic for the migrant's social relations (Philpott 1968: 473-474), a migrant's remittance frequency depends on for example their perception of the 'correct' spending of remittances, or the fidelity of their family back home. Furthermore, I thereby also argue that the remittance frequency shows the perceived 'urgency' of the remittances, with for example migrants who moved with the motivation to care for family members often remitting more often, because their remittances might pay for the family's basic necessities. However, while authors like Philpott (1968) and Cohen (2011) discuss remittance practices from a solely social relations point of view, I argue that broader structures (like job agency practices or the BNP2TKI's policy) outside of a migrant's control also to a large degree determine their ability to earn and remit money abroad.

While in the field I heard surprisingly little first-hand accounts of 'failed' migration periods abroad, or of for example instances where migration led to (irreparably) large tensions within a migrant's family, while Coe for example argues that migration exacerbates social tensions within a family (Coe 2011: 159). While it is of course possible that situations like these simply did not arise within the specific migration context of the (ex-) migrants I spoke to, as for example Berremans argues, my position as an outsider within the community might have made people less willing to share certain personal stories with me (Berremans 2012: 157), especially because spouses or family members were often also present (in the house) when I conducted interviews with respondents. Furthermore, as I used an interpreter to do most of my interviews, my Indonesian not being good enough to conduct interviews, this outsider status might have been made even more explicit. While I tried to circumvent these problems by establishing rapport, re-phrasing and re-asking questions, and all the other 'tricks' I have been taught during my studies, it is still important to consider the impact of my position as an outsider on the data I gathered.

In my opinion, an analysis of the ability to earn remittances abroad is important as the period abroad to a very large degree determines the remittance spending afterwards. Of course, a lack of remittances will mean that there is little to discuss afterwards, but migrants who do have remittances left usually have to make agreements on how to use them. As I argued in chapter six, the motivations to migrate (care for family members, long-term economic benefit, or commodity

purchasing) and the agreements made based on them before the migrant moves abroad, determine to a large degree for what general purpose the remittances are spent. I hereby argue that, especially when there are more remittances than necessary to for example care for family members, the migration period abroad has resulted in the migrant having more power to decide about the specific use of remittances, like investing in a chicken farm when a migrant moves abroad with the motivation to obtain long-term economic benefits. However, while for example Gardiner Barber argues that migration empowers women to a degree that they would not have been able to obtain had they stayed in their own country (Gardiner Barber 2002: 56), my respondents did not necessarily frame their experiences in a gender-based empowerment narrative. Though, as I argued in the previous chapter, I did find that migration might lead to 'general' empowerment within their family (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1013-1014), with regards to decision making about remittances spending.

Though the migration processes and structures that I described in this thesis are to a certain degree unique to the time and place that I did my research, and to the specific (ex-)migrants I spoke to, I want to use them to show the importance of social relations in shaping (the results of) a migrant's migration process. While some (Indonesian) policy-makers that I spoke to for example attributed positive outcomes of migration abroad to good policy-making, and negative ones on the migrants' bad personality, I would argue that is it firstly important to identify the different actors that are involved in a migration process, and consider the different structures that a migrant is part of, that might influence them in turn. Policy-making and personality certainly have an impact on migration processes, but as I showed in this thesis, motivations to migrate, agreements to spent remittances, remittances practices, and factors that are outside a migrant's (or the government's) control entirely, play at least an equally important role. I would therefore also recommend future researchers, policy-makers, and anyone with a general interest in labour migration, to consider the different roles that social relations play in shaping labour migration practices.

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Family, Politics and Remittances: The Roles of Social Relations in Central Javanese Labour Migration

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